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**The Role of Emotion in the Aesthetic Appreciation of
Nature.
Ph.D.**

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The Role of Emotion in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature.

Lucy Armitstead-Pinkney

Abstract.

This thesis argues that the emotion felt in response to the aesthetic appreciation of nature is relative to the relationship the observer has with the natural object or scene. The relative character of the emotional aesthetic response to nature indicates that the response is in one important sense subjective and yet the thesis also argues that some emotional responses to nature may be inappropriate and suggests guidelines for preventing such inappropriate responses.

If emotion is linked to reason then the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature must be also involve reason. The emotions felt are relative to the associations we have with the aesthetic object and are therefore reliant on the beliefs and experiences one has of the aesthetic object regardless of whether these beliefs are merited. A central part of this thesis examines relativism within aesthetics and how versions of objects are created and used to respond to the world.

Given that the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are relative to the observer, the next question is as to how appropriate these emotional responses are. It is argued that although relative, the response may be considered inappropriate to the aesthetic object as it may be based on a narrow or weak understanding of the object. To prevent this three guidelines are proposed for containing the emotional aesthetic response to that which is appropriate; disinterestedness, perception lead aesthetics and responding well (a concept borrowed from Brady).

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Introduction.

The aim of this thesis is to explore the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and to then discuss the appropriateness of these emotions. I will be arguing for a relativist position, claiming that the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are related to our assumptions regarding the aesthetic object which can be heavily influenced by social factors. My theory of aesthetic emotion is therefore in one important sense subjective in that I will be arguing against the existence of objective emotional properties in nature. Given this somewhat subjective stance it may appear surprising that I go on to argue that the emotions felt in the aesthetic appreciation of nature may be inappropriate or, to use Hepburn's phraseology, 'trivial'. I will base this claim on the argument that even though there are no objectively 'correct' emotional responses to nature, it is still possible to say that the relativist 'versions' of the aesthetic object we are exposed to may be more or less appropriate to the aesthetic object. I will therefore end this thesis by proposing guidelines for containing the emotional aesthetic response in order that it can be considered 'serious'.

Interest in the aesthetic appreciation of nature appears to have arisen in direct correlation to the rise in interest in environmental issues and philosophy. Historically the aesthetics of nature have been somewhat neglected in comparison to the aesthetics of art. In the Classical age nature was rarely enjoyed for its own sake and the aesthetics of nature were not discussed. Plato and Aristotle did mention natural beauty but only in terms of the representation of bodily beauty through art and the idea that nature needed

to be presented through art in order to be seen as aesthetically valuable.¹ This neglect of the aesthetics of nature continued into the Middle Ages where, certainly in the western world, perceptions of nature were heavily influenced by the Bible as well as by the fact that humans were dependent on nature for food and shelter, or in other words, survival which limited the ability of most societies to be able to step back and appreciate nature as aesthetic.² Nature was seen to be something that was full of danger both physically and morally. Humans considered themselves separate from nature; a view that was supported by the Bible in that Genesis in particular mentions humans having ‘dominion’ over nature.³

It was in the Renaissance period that nature started to be considered more seriously. As an interest in science grew, more attention and importance was given to nature meaning that nature started to be seen in a more positive, and therefore more aesthetic, light. One drawback of this is that a focus on reason meant that the dualisms of mind/body, human/nature were emphasised meaning that even though there was increased interest in nature, the mindset was such that it was seen as beneath humans and therefore less worthy of our attention than art. This attitude remained in aesthetics as, with the notable exception of Kant, the aesthetics of nature was generally dismissed as unimportant until fairly recently. As Adorno says,

“Natural beauty vanished from aesthetics thanks to the expanding supremacy of the concept of human freedom and dignity inaugurated by Kant but fully realized in Schiller and Hegel, who transplanted these ethical concepts into

¹ Carroll, N. (1999) *Philosophy of Art*, Routledge, New York, Chapter 1.

² Thomas, K. (1983) *Man and the Natural World*, Penguin Books Ltd, Allen Lane, London.

³ White, L. (1996) “The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis” in *This Sacred Earth*, Eds. R. S. Gottlieb, Routledge, London, pp.184-193.

aesthetics, with the result that in art, like everywhere else, nothing deserved respect unless it owed its existence to the autonomous subject”.⁴

One can see how the aesthetics of nature have evolved by looking at how attitudes towards nature have changed. It was in the late eighteenth century that interest in environmental issues started. Jeremy Bentham discussed the problem of whether animals could suffer. The questions raised by the Enlightenment regarding the states of spirit and matter had lead to not only a fascination with and expansion in biology and ecology, but also the asking of serious questions regarding the position and mental abilities of animals. This of course had to result in a discussion of how important, morally, one should regard animals. The interest in ecology continued through the nineteenth century with the publication of Thoreau's *Walden* in 1845, the creation of Yellowstone, the first US National Park in 1872 followed by Yosemite, Sequoia and General Grant in 1890.⁵ It was in the twentieth century however that environmental ethics as a field of philosophy really started to develop. Although Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* (1949) was widely read, it did not, according to Sylvan, make a particular impact in philosophical circles.⁶ It was in the sixties and seventies that the environment really started to attract serious attention. In 1962 Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring* was published and has since become a classic. As publicity regarding environmental problems such as global warming and species extinction increased, so, inevitably did questions regarding our responsibilities in terms of nature. As evidence to prove that humans were having a detrimental effect on the planet accumulated,

⁴ Adorno, T.W. (1984) *Aesthetic Theory*, translated by C. Lenhardt, Ed. G. Adorno & R. Tiedemann, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London.

⁵ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*, Yale University Press, New Haven.

⁶ Sylvan (Routley) R. (1998) "Is there a need for a New, an Environmental, Ethic?" in *Environmental Philosophy – From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Eds. M. E. Zimmerman et al., Prentice Hall, New Jersey, pp.17-25.

philosophers started to query how moral our actions were. In a paper originally published in 1973, Sylvan gives an example which seems to illustrate nicely much of the problem philosophers were facing. He presents the 'Last Man Example' which consists of a situation where there is only one surviving human on the earth. The human starts to randomly destroy everything on the earth. There are no future human generations to consider so the question is, if the last human cannot be considered to be harming any other humans in the destruction of nature, do we feel comfortable in saying that there is nothing immoral about his actions?⁷ Although this is an example that has been criticised widely, it is still useful in demonstrating the main point which is that many philosopher found themselves wanting to argue that the actions of the 'Last man' were in some way wrong. This implies that there must be something in nature, something belonging to nature that has value apart from nature's usefulness to humans. It implies an intrinsic value. This sense of responsibility, or at least the question of it has been a major issue in environmental ethics with philosophers such as Singer, Regan and Taylor discussing popular issues such as Animal rights. Arne Naess is an example of a philosopher whose philosophy is in many way characteristic of the direction of the environmental philosophy movement. He proposed a theory of 'Deep Ecology' which although problematic in many of his recommendations for a more environmentally friendly lifestyle, is ultimately based on the belief that nature has intrinsic value and that therefore human have moral obligations to nature.

.. --⁷Ibid, p.21 ..

“The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent worth). These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes.”⁸

If one turns to look then, at the field of aesthetics, it is unsurprising that as the interest in environmental ethics has increased, so has the interest in environmental aesthetics. It is also unsurprising that the direction environmental aesthetics has taken is similar to the direction of ethics in that it has placed a large emphasis on appreciating nature appropriately and appreciating nature in terms of an intrinsic value. An obvious difference between the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the appreciation of art is that nature lacks an artist. There is no intent guiding the observer’s appreciation. This leaves two main problems for the aesthetics of nature. Firstly there is the problem that on one hand we have no objective criteria to judge a natural object as beautiful meaning that all of nature is beautiful, whilst on the other hand we still respond to some nature as ugly or less beautiful.⁹ The second problem which is more relevant to this thesis is that we have nothing to tell us how we should be responding to the aesthetic object due to the absence of an artist. In art there is an artist who creates the work meaning that the artwork can be judged on the basis of the artist’s skill or by analysing what possible theory or feeling the artwork might have been created to express. There is a wealth of art theory and art history to assist us in responding appropriately to artworks whilst in theory one can respond in any manner to nature without criticism. Given the issues that were arising in environmental ethics regarding intrinsic value and human responsibility, it was inevitable that attention would turn to the problem of appreciating nature on ‘its own

⁸ Naess, A. (1998) “The Deep Ecological Movement” in *Environmental Philosophy – From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Eds. M. E. Zimmerman et al., Prentice Hall, New Jersey, p.196.

⁹ Adorno, T.W. (1984) *Aesthetic Theory*.

terms' and awareness of human responsibility to appreciate nature appropriately. Philosophers increasingly argued that the air of human guilt that had arisen in environmental ethics should be extended to environmental aesthetics.

The role of emotion in the aesthetics of nature is an area in which there has not been extensive research. It is interesting to note that as the aesthetics of nature has started to attract interest, much of the focus has been on aspects such as the question of whether environmental aesthetics can ever be objective, "positive" aesthetics¹⁰ and the role of imagination. The interest in imagination is of particular relevance as both imagination and emotion tend towards subjective elements that both increase the scope of possible aesthetic responses as well as incurring potential difficulties. I believe that the role of emotion is just as relevant as imagination to having a full understanding of the aesthetic response to nature, especially considering the emphasis there has recently been regarding the 'serious' and 'trivial' in terms of aesthetic response. Emotion is commonly felt in response to nature and is at least as open to 'trivial' responses as the role of imagination. I therefore feel that an analysis of the role of emotion is essential to understanding environmental aesthetics properly, especially in terms of having an understanding of the more problematic, subjective elements of the response. An immediate criticism of my thesis could be made here by saying that Noel Carroll proposed a theory of the aesthetic response to nature that assumed an important role for emotion. However I feel that his theory, whilst including emotion, did not provide a substantial debate as to the role of emotion. He wished to use Carlson's science based

¹⁰ Positive aesthetics refers to the idea that all of nature has the potential to be found beautiful.

theory whilst also allowing for emotion to be felt.¹¹ He argued that this would allow for the presence of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature whilst also embracing a positive approach to the aesthetics of nature that allowed one to claim that there are objective aesthetic properties in nature that one can use to criticise negative responses to nature based on a 'true' understanding of what nature really is. This does not clearly explain either how the emotion arises or its appropriateness. Carroll argued that by using Carlson's natural Environment Model as a base one could presume to be appreciating nature 'as nature'. This theory of Carroll's therefore cannot be said to provide a definitive answer to the question regarding the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, meaning that the aim of my thesis is not redundant.¹²

Having discussed how emotional aesthetic responses to nature occur, it will be necessary to discuss whether these responses are appropriate or not. In his paper 'Trivial and serious in the aesthetic appreciation of nature', Hepburn describes how various aesthetic concepts can either give a 'serious', truthful impression of nature or a 'trivial', superficial or dishonest impression of nature. He argues that a trivial approach to nature

"distorts, ignores, suppresses truth about its objects, feels and thinks about them in ways that falsify how nature really is".¹³

Trivial responses to nature can lead to a sentimentalised or anthropocentric attitude towards nature. Modern culture has led many Western societies to have an anthropocentric view of nature and to believe that humans are apart from and above

¹¹ Carroll, N. (1993) "On being moved by nature: Between religion and natural history" in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal and I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 244-266.

¹² Emotion in nature has been discussed in Howarth, J. "Nature's Moods", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.35, No. 2, pp. 108-120. This however focuses on emotion or moods 'in' nature rather than in the aesthetic response. This ideas put forth in this paper are discussed briefly in chapter four.

¹³ Hepburn, R. W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal and I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p69.

nature. This can result in humans forgetting their place in nature and their vulnerability to it when appreciating nature. Humans are part of the natural environment and ignoring that results in a dishonest attitude towards nature. If we see ourselves as apart from nature, we may not admit our vulnerability to natural objects such as a thunderstorm. By doing this we lose the sense of thrill in the storm that can be felt by understanding the storms' power over us. Sentimentalising can occur through the anthropomorphisation of nature. We often apply human characteristics, feelings and behaviour to animals. We may refer to owls as 'wise' or a fox as 'cunning' but have no reason to believe these attributes are true and such references create a distorted view of nature.

Sentimentalization can also result in a humanized view of nature. One may see nature as 'cute' rather than for the natural object that it is. The sanitisation of nature via documentaries is a good example of this. When one watches a program about lion cubs one is rarely given the view of the growth of a fierce, wild animal, but is instead presented with lots of adorable shots of cubs playing together.

“Nature...can be made aesthetically contemplable only by a sentimentalizing, falsifying selectivity”¹⁴

Sentimentalizing nature results in the loss of awe in nature and is very dishonest. Our emotional responses to nature reflect our opinions and beliefs about the environment. If we are permitted to give in to anthropocentric, sentimental or anthropomorphic emotional responses to nature, we trivialize nature and reduce the value of the aesthetic experience. This is a central issue in the aesthetics of nature currently and therefore one that will be central to my thesis.

¹⁴ Ibid, p72.

Assumptions.

There are two main points that need to be dealt with before starting on the main body of this thesis, both of which are a matter of terminology. Firstly it is worth mentioning that throughout this thesis I will often be referring to the 'natural aesthetic object'. I am aware that the term 'object' is not always the most appropriate, however it is necessary in the course of this thesis to use this kind of language in order to avoid becoming caught up in lengthy description in examples. The term 'object' is, I am aware sometimes unfortunate in terms of what it implies as well and (as mentioned by Brady¹⁵) has been criticised by some philosophers in terms of natural aesthetics, however for brevity and consistency, the term will have to suffice.

The second point is that any thesis that claims to deal with natural aesthetics has first to decide what is to be meant by 'nature'. One could take it to mean anything that is not human. This however has the obvious problem that humans are natural beings. To include humans then means that one must include everything. A painting must be considered natural as it is a product of humans just as a birds' nest is a product of a starling. If this is the case, then there is no point trying to discuss the aesthetics of nature in a meaningful manner as it could not be separated from art. I will therefore be following Hepburn's approach in his discussion regarding the involvement of humans in nature where he uses the idea of a sliding scale.¹⁶ The two extremes are obviously the completely human and the completely non-human. The definition of nature that I will be employing will therefore be towards the non-human end of the scale whilst also trying to bear in mind that there is no definite 'cut-off' point telling us when an object ceases to

¹⁵ Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.56, No.2, pp. 139-147.

¹⁶ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

be natural and become human. Although this assumes that humans are non-natural in a certain sense, it is also the only definition that allows us to say anything truly meaningful regarding the aesthetics of nature.

Methodology.

The thesis shall start with a discussion of emotion in general in order that one can be sure what I am referring to by the term and to explore the role of emotion in everyday life. I will then move on to discussing emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of art. Most of the theory regarding the aesthetic appreciation of nature has been inspired by or is based on the theory surrounding the aesthetic appreciation of art. It is therefore the logical place for me to look in terms of emotion in the aesthetic response. I will then go on to look more closely at the differences between the aesthetics of nature and of art to demonstrate that a theory applied to one may be applicable to the other. I will also at that point examine what theories have been presented explaining the aesthetic response to nature so that a clearer understanding of the main issues can be known. I will then be able to present my own view of how emotional aesthetic responses to nature occur which I will then further back up with a discussion of Goodman's ideas on relativity. At this point I will present an illustration of the relative character of the emotional aesthetic response to nature by examining how social attitudes towards nature have changed over time as a direct result of that society's relationship and dependence on their natural environment. Having then argued for a relativist role of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature, I will then be able to move on to the problem of inappropriateness. I will first show that inappropriate emotional responses to nature can still occur within a

relativist system and second that such responses are, as many other philosophers such as Hepburn, Berleant, Budd, Eaton, Carlson and Brady have argued, harmful. I will then move on to my final chapter in which I will discuss the various attempts that have been suggested to overcome the problem of inappropriateness before suggesting my own theory which will utilise the three guidelines of perception, disinterestedness, and 'responding well'¹⁷ in order to prevent inappropriate emotional responses to the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

¹⁷ The term 'responding well' is a reference to Brady's concept of 'imagining well' which shall be discussing in the final chapter of the thesis.

Chapter 1 – Emotion.

1.1 What is Emotion?

The aim of this first chapter is to argue that emotions are not completely random responses to any given stimuli but rather rational responses based on the observer's understanding of the object or event that the emotion has been triggered by. The rational aspect of emotion means that it is possible for emotional responses to be both analyzed and critiqued. If the emotional aesthetic responses to nature were completely arbitrary responses, free from any reason or logic, one could not propose to discuss the possible inappropriateness of such emotional responses with any real significance. To gain an understanding of emotion, the historical philosophical background surrounding emotion will be briefly discussed along with a brief overview of what emotion actually is. The main focus of this chapter however will be on the link between reason and emotion and will be examined by way of looking at the ability of the individual to be responsible for their emotions.

Emotion is a term which is used commonly with little consideration and therefore needs some introduction so as it can be discussed further. Emotions have often been argued to be the unreasonable passions which must be controlled by reason. Although this slave-master relationship has been disputed by Hume, for example, who believed that our moral action should be guided by our emotions, the superiority of reason has tended to the fore. The question that has played a major role is whether the emotions and reason are the same or if they are separate.¹⁸ From a historic point of view,

¹⁸ This is a question that will be discussed in more depth shortly as it is an intrinsic point in the discussion concerning the responsibility one has for one's emotions.

emotions have played an increasingly significant role in philosophy. Plato did not consider emotion to be important enough to be a separate component of the tripartite soul but Aristotle considered emotions to be capable of altering one's reasoning, a phenomenon that is aimed at something rather than occurring randomly. Aristotle considered emotion to be essential to the 'good life', despite his moral concerns over emotions such as anger. He sees emotions as inseparable from rationality and therefore would argue that emotions could be virtuous. In contrast to this, the Stoics considered the emotions to be problematic and best avoided. They claimed that

“emotions (are) conceptual errors, conducive to misery....the best life could be achieved only by realizing the pointlessness of emotional attachments and involvement”.¹⁹

Descartes discussed emotion in *Passions of the Soul* and argued that the physical manner in which emotion is often expressed, the physical sensations that accompany emotion, is due to an instinctive response to whatever event or object inspires the feeling. This means that the emotions, in Descartes' view are part of the soul rather than simply a physical process that can be separated from reason despite the fact that Descartes does not see emotions as strictly rational. Hume, as previously mentioned, considered emotion important in that he believed it to be the factor that inspires us to act morally and therefore placed the passions in a far more important place than they had been previously. He claimed that although an emotion may be felt through sensations, an emotion can only really be identified by examining the multifarious ideas that resulted in the felt emotion. In other words, it is not merely that felt aspect of the

¹⁹ Craig, E. (1998) *Routledge Encyclopaedia of Philosophy, Volume Three – Descartes to Gender and science*, Routledge, London, p.287

emotion which is important but also the event, experience and supporting beliefs that lead to the emotion. An emotion such as envy therefore, does not simply consist of the sensation of envy but also of the experience of wanting something belonging to someone else or feeling that someone else's good fortune should be one's own. Hume's account is in sharp contrast to those who wished to dismiss or disapprove of emotion and is therefore in some aspects similar to Nietzsche. Nietzsche went much further than Hume in his praise of emotion in that he believed many emotions to be superior to reason as he argued that our passions were ultimately better at guiding us correctly than our reason.

In modern philosophy the significance of emotion is no longer dismissed as it once was, even if Nietzsche's concept that it should overtake reason is not generally accepted. One philosopher who has attempted to describe what emotion *is*, is Gilbert Ryle. He describes four types of emotion, inclinations, moods, agitations and feelings. Inclinations, moods and agitations are separated from feelings in that they are not, unlike feelings, occurrences. He argues that these three phenomena are different kinds of tendencies and do not occur publicly or privately.

Feelings are occurrences and are felt in response to events or stimuli. They are felt and are commonly associated with the physical. Ryle claims that feelings are felt through

“thrills, twinges, pangs, throbs, wrenches, itches, pricklings, chills, glows, loads, qualms, hankerings, curdlings, sinkings, tensions, gnawings and shocks”.²⁰

A feeling of dread when considering an exam is not only psychological but physically felt. This is not to say that all emotions are necessarily physical felt but that there is a

²⁰Ryle, G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind*, Hutchinson, London, p.81

definite link between the mental associations that trigger an emotion and the physical feeling that the emotion manifests itself as. There are some philosophers such as William James who wish to claim that there is a definition physical link with emotion. James's view was that one could not experience an emotion without feeling it,

“For James it is not possible for you to be, for example, angry and yet not feel angry, since, for him, being angry and feeling angry just *are* bodily feelings, caused by a perception.”²¹

Most philosophers however tend towards the weaker and more temperate view of Ryle that claims that the association that results in the emotion is the significant point, whether it is physical or metaphorical.

An agitation is a violent form of emotion in which one might experience opposing feelings. It refers to the agitation that might result from strong emotions or feelings. One could argue that agitations are in fact simply strong feelings rather than a separate aspect of emotion. Agitations and inclinations are similar in that they can be argued not to be central to the concept of emotion. An inclination is a predisposition towards a particular emotion such as an optimistic attitude. This of course can be disputed as an actual emotion as an inclination towards a particular feeling is not the same as a felt emotion. In between the optimistic feelings that an individual is prone to, one would not still say that they are happy even if they are inclined that way, meaning that, whilst our inclinations may be connected to our emotions, they are not emotions themselves. Inclinations are similar to the second aspect that Ryle refers to, that of moods. Moods refer to the certain frame of mind of the individual which again may lead that individual to respond to events with particular feelings. It is common for example

²¹ Goldie, P. (2000) *The Emotions: A Philosophical Exploration*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, p.53.

for one to claim to be in a 'bad mood' which may then result in that individual responding with more negative feelings than usual to further events.

"Names of moods, then, are not the names of feelings. But to be in a particular mood is to be in the mood, among other things, to feel certain sorts of feelings in certain sorts of situations".²²

It could of course be argued that moods are in fact simply feelings. Moods are different from inclinations in that they are felt and can therefore be said to be emotional but it is unclear whether they are really separate from feelings. They both tend to monopolise the individual feeling them and occur due to events surrounding the individual. Both feelings and moods can be said to affect the attitude an individual has to the world and affect each other.

For the sake of this thesis the understanding of the term emotion that I will be taking will be the approach to feelings and moods that Ryle sets out with the emphasis on the role of feeling. In terms of aesthetics, or more accurately the emotions felt in the aesthetic response, it is feelings that play the most common role and therefore them that I will be referring to by the term emotion. In order to further understand emotion, it is necessary to examine the ability of the individual to bear responsibility for their emotions in order that we can further discuss the relationship between emotion and reason.

1.2 The Emotions - Can emotions be considered inappropriate?

In order to show that an emotional response to nature can ever be considered as inappropriate, one must prove that one is in control of one's emotions to some extent. If

²² Ryle, G. (1949) *The Concept of Mind*, p.100.

one was accused of sentimentalizing a lion cub when one had no control over one's feelings, this would be unfair criticism. If emotions are completely involuntary then one cannot be held responsible for them.²³ If one believed that a man's anger was completely involuntary and beyond his control, then we could not hold him responsible for that emotion. We cannot be required to alter and control our emotions if this is considered impossible. Without proving some degree of control of our emotions, considering the appropriateness of emotional responses to nature is irrelevant.

A major area which debates the relevance of emotion is moral philosophy.²⁴ The role of emotions in our moral judgments is particularly demonstrative of how emotions can be inappropriate.²⁵ Virtue ethics are particularly reliant on emotions for moral judgments. Rather than having moral laws to guide behaviour, virtue ethics is the idea that particular character traits should be considered moral, placing the emphasis on the agent rather than the act.²⁶ One could not have emotions inappropriate to the task and still be considered moral. A problem created by denying emotional responsibility is that a moral act could be done without being accompanied by a moral feeling. If one was to follow the moral law 'thou shalt not murder' whilst being constantly full of hatred for others, they would be considered morally equal to an individual who obeyed the law, not just out of respect for the law but also from a genuine compassion for others. If

²³ Sabini, J. & Silver, M. (1987) "Emotions, Responsibility and Character" in *Responsibility, Character and the Emotions*, Eds. F. Schoeman, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 165-175.

²⁴ Hursthouse, Rosalind (1999) *On Virtue Ethics*. Oxford University Press, Oxford

²⁵ Ben-Ze'en, Aaron (1997) 'Emotions and Morality'. *The Journal of Value Inquiry* Vol.31 pp195-212

²⁶ Kosman, L.A. (1980) "Being properly affected: Virtues and Feelings" in *Aristotle's ethics in Essays on Aristotle's Ethics*, Eds. Amelie Oksenberg Rorty, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, pp. 103-116.

emotions are morally irrelevant there is no problem with this.²⁷ By removing attention to emotion, many such undesirable situations could arise.

1.3 Kant.

Kant presented an objection to this in that he argued that emotions are outside of morality, as morality as he sees it is concerned only with the will.²⁸ He argued that emotions are distractions from rational thinking and encumber the rational being. He describes the passions as 'chains' and claims that true freedom of action can only come from rationality as it allows us to overcome our emotive responses and not only be guided by experience. In Kant's view emotions are immediate responses to a situation and are uncontrolled. He believed that if one was prompted by compassion or sympathy for others to do a moral act, the reason for the act would not be a clear judgment of our moral responsibility but a desire to follow our emotions that just happens to co-incide with another's needs. If we rely on moral emotions then there would be no real concept of right and wrong and moral behaviour would be self-interested.

The problem with the picture Kant presents is that it avoids the fact that some emotions are moral in themselves. Sympathy is an example of such emotions. When confronted with a moral dilemma such as whether one should save a sick pregnant woman or her baby, or any situation with conflicting interests, it is inevitable that one party will come out worse. In such situations, most moral agents would feel sympathy for the party disadvantaged by their choice. The doctor who could save only the pregnant woman and not the baby and feels no sadness afterwards may have acted

²⁷ Kemp, J. (1964) *Reason, Action and Morality*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, New York

²⁸ Kant's ideas regarding morality and reason can mostly be found in the *Critique of Practical Reason* (1788) :a good discussion can be found in Blackburn, S. (1998) *Ruling Passions – A Theory of Practical Reasoning*, Clarendon Press, Oxford.

correctly but would be considered less moral than the doctor who acted identically but felt regret for the death of the baby. It is quite possible that emotions can be inappropriate in moral dilemmas and should be overridden, but to deny them altogether as irrelevant distractions denies a crucial part of moral behaviour.²⁹

A reason given by Kant for not believing in emotional responsibility is that emotional responses are immediate and are never planned.³⁰ They are non-deliberate responses to a situation. One does not plan to fall in love or plan to grieve. We cannot actively decide how we will respond emotionally and may often wish that we felt differently. We may wish not to be in love with a particular individual or may wish we did not feel jealous or guilty. This lack of planning points towards a lack of control, meaning we cannot be responsible for our emotions.

A problem with Kant's view that we are not responsible for our emotions is that our society does judge emotional responses and considers whether or not they are appropriate. It is common for people to be criticised for being angry or to be told they are being unreasonable. As previously discussed, one cannot blame an individual for something over which they have no control. Therefore the blame attributed to individuals by society due to their emotive responses indicates that society believes that one does have some control over our emotions. Whilst this point provides little proof that society's judgment is fair, it is important to be aware of the current attitudes in moral issues such as this and it demonstrates how Kant's conception of morality is rather narrow in that it misses out observing how we judge others. If it is generally accepted that there are some emotions that can be controlled or chosen to some extent,

²⁹ Wallace, R. Jay (1994) *Responsibility and the Moral Sentiments*. Harvard University Press: Cambridge, Massachusetts

³⁰ Sabini, J. & Silver, M. (1987) "Emotions, Responsibility and Character".

then this implies that such a feat has been successfully undertaken by some of the population. If very few people were able to resist murdering their neighbours then society's judgment of murder would likely be far more tolerant than at present. As most of us can turn against murder and resist it, society shuns those who cannot. It is accepted that humans have control over ourselves and those who do not use their control should be punished. Society's response indicates (even if it does not prove it) that we have found from our own experiences that our emotional responses can be controlled and altered through experience.

Kant claimed that emotions are partial as they tend to be focused on a narrow area and because they tend to be personally interested.³¹ We tend to feel emotionally about certain events at particular times. We can become emotionally involved in a film and then disconnect from that emotional state and become emotionally involved in something else. The fact we feel love for one individual is completely unrelated to our feeling of grief at the death of a friend. The emotional events we experience are mostly separate from each other. In addition to this they are always seen from our own point of view. We can rationally see a situation from all sides but emotionally, we are always involved. Even when feeling compassion at another's loss, it is still us who feels the compassion, based on how we believe we would feel in a similar situation. This causes a problem in holding individuals as emotionally responsible as it again implies that we are not in control of our emotions. We are not free to choose what they focus on. They

³¹ Williams, B. (1998) "Persons, Character, and Morality" in *Ethical Theory 2 – Theories About How We Should Live – Oxford Readings in Philosophy*, Eds. J. Rachels, Oxford University Press, Oxford, pp.170-186.

always involve ourselves.³² In reasoning we can choose to detach and take a disinterested stance in order to decide what we should do, whereas if emotions do not allow us to step back, we lose control by being unable to separate ourselves from our situation.

A response to the accusation that emotions are biased is to accept that this is correct, but nothing to bemoan. Emotion mostly involves issues which involve us. It is natural that they are biased as there are some issues or people that are more important to us than others. Not all factors in decision making are equal. If one was considering two sick children in hospital, both in need of blood transfusions with a limited blood supply on hand, it is natural and understandable for the parents to each believe their own child should have the blood. Rationally there is no reason one child should be treated over the other but few would claim that the parents' desire to have their child treated was inappropriate. By treating all factors equally, reason can miss out what is really important to us and thereby confuse judgment. By not discounting emotion as irrelevant, the decision process is helped by improving the measure of importance of the various factors.

1.4 Reason and Experience in Emotion.

A further counter argument against Kant is that our emotions may be influenced by disinterested reasoning. The descriptions of emotion as being both non-deliberate and partial are important but are too simplistic. A major problem with claiming that emotions are irrelevant is that it presumes that there is no link between emotions and

³² Nussbaum, Martha C. (1990) 'Love's Knowledge' in *Love's Knowledge* eds. Martha C. Nussbaum. Oxford University Press, Oxford pp. 261-285

reason. The traditional profile of these two mental phenomena is that reason is logical, controlled and disinterested and emotion is erratic, uncontrollable and self-involved.³³ This view is far too basic. Emotions are not static knee-jerk reactions to specific stimuli; they are constantly fluctuating, developing phenomena which are shaped by reason.³⁴ An illustration of this is abortion. The issue of abortion tends to invoke strong, emotive reactions in many individuals as to whether or not it should be legal. These emotive responses however may be based on reason, experience and education. If one feels passionately against abortion, this may be because of a rational interpretation of the Bible or a rationally thought out moral theory or based on an interpretation of scientific evidence. The same kind of reasons would be used by someone who supports abortion. They might base their reasoning on the results of banning abortion or on scientific evidence of how soon a fetus can feel pain. Both arguments are emotional responses to rational thinking. There is an intrinsic link between the rational and the emotional.

“That we appeal to beliefs in identifying emotions suggests that emotion is not merely contingent, causally connected to belief”.³⁵

Even love, which has been given as an example of a pure emotion that can never be logically planned, is based on getting to know another person. Even if one was to believe in an instant attraction, true love, this would still only kick in after meeting. You can not love someone whom you had never met or have no knowledge of. Even if one believed they were in love with a famous person such as Elvis whom one had never met, this love would still be based on an idea of Elvis’s personality, what he looked like, how

³³ Lyons, W. (1980) *Emotions*, Cambridge studies in philosophy, Cambridge.

³⁴ Calhoun, C. (1984) “Cognitive emotions” in *What is an Emotion – Classical Readings in Philosophical Psychology*, Eds. C. Calhoun & R.C. Solomon, Oxford University Press, New York/Oxford, pp. 327-342.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p.327

his voice sounds and any other information one had about Elvis. The love one felt would still be based on information one has despite the fact one had never met Elvis. Another example of the interaction of reason and emotion is self-justification. When one feels guilty about something, perhaps overspending on clothes, one runs through a debate of how the guilty act was justified in order to reassure oneself and absolve oneself of guilt. We find excuses for lying in that the lie might have avoided trouble or that the person we lied to deserved it. We attempt (with varying degrees of success) to reason with our emotions. The fact that this can be even slightly effective shows that some reason is involved in shaping our emotions. For an emotion to be a response to a particular situation; there must be some rational interpretation of the situation, whether it is correct or not. That emotions can change at all shows the role of reason. As our rational understanding of a situation changes and develops, so does the depth and shape of emotion.³⁶

A philosopher who supports the idea that our emotions can be altered is Aristotle. He argues that firstly, our emotions are shaped by our experiences and secondly that it is our duty to seek educational experiences that will change our emotional responses for the better.³⁷ He believed that all of our emotional and rational behaviour is shaped by our experiences.³⁸ Our experiences give us the beliefs about the world which we use to judge the world and to reason. This means that it is through our experiences of the world that we learn to respond emotionally in particular ways in certain situations. We learn to feel anger and hurt at being insulted as we learn what the

³⁶ Lyons, W. (1980) *Emotions*.

³⁷ Kosman, L.A. (1980) "Being properly affected: Virtues and Feelings".

³⁸ Cottingham, John (1998) *Philosophy and the Good Life*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

insult means and learn that it implies a rejection from another human being. Children learn how to behave in a loving manner or angry manner from the behaviour they are surrounded by. Everything we know comes from either instinct or experience. If our emotions are shaped by experience, this means that by educating ourselves it is possible to change our emotive responses to certain situations. An example of how people do this is counseling. Grief and jealousy are often given as emotions we may not wish to feel and in the case of jealousy, may have no reason to feel, yet may be unable to avoid. These are emotions often used to demonstrate the uncontrollable nature of emotions. However they are also two of the most common emotions one can seek counseling for. Counseling could be viewed by Aristotle as a process of education leading to the control of certain emotions. By going through counseling, one is learning about one's emotion and so changing one's perception of it. The success of the self-help book industry must also imply that our emotions can be changed by exposing us to new ideas. If emotions were completely irrelevant, unalterable mental events, there would be no place for (and no success from) psychiatry.

"A moral virtue with respect to feelings or emotions... is the power to have and to avoid certain emotions, the ability to discriminate in what one feels."³⁹

Aristotle claims it is our duty to seek to educate ourselves and others as to what emotions are appropriate and how they can be changed.⁴⁰

An objection to Aristotle's concept of how we can change our emotional responses is that we are still not in real control of them.⁴¹ If our personalities are formed by our genetic make up and by our experiences, then obviously we are not choosing any

³⁹ Ibid, p.107.

⁴⁰ Ben-Ze'en, Aaron (1997) 'Emotions and Morality'.

⁴¹ Sabini, J. & Silver, M. (1987) "Emotions, Responsibility and Character".

of behaviour, including our emotions. Aristotle then expects us to actively seek experience and education to change our emotions. However, if our personality is shaped by experience then our willingness to educate ourselves and to seek to alter our emotions is out of our control. If our experiences so far have not trained us to wish to seek certain emotions, or how to judge a suitable emotion or how to seek new educational experience then we cannot be expected to improve ourselves. We do not choose our experiences and so, according to Aristotle's theory, cannot be blamed for the results of our experiences. A counter argument to this problem of Aristotle's is that those who have been fortunate enough to have had appropriate experience then have the responsibility of educating others.⁴² An example of this is the adaptations of literary classics on television. By the translating works such as *Pride and Prejudice* to screen plays for television and presenting the literature in an accessible form (screenplay) in an accessible area (television), Jane Austen is introduced to a new audience, many of whom might never consider seeking out the book in the library. These adaptations are very popular and have succeeded in educating people so that they take more of an interest in classic literature. By exposing people to ideas about appropriate emotion in an accessible manner, it is possible to educate people and thereby influence their emotional responses to situations. Just as moral laws or behaviour must be taught, so must appropriate emotional behaviour.

A response to the problem of responsibility for our emotions, first conceived by Aristotle, is that whilst emotion may be immediate, the fact that they are based on reason means that they are likely to be shaped over time. We may not be able to choose our emotions but we are free to investigate why we feel the way we do and consider the

⁴² Kosman, L.A. (1980) "Being properly affected: Virtues and Feelings".

appropriateness of the emotion. By bearing responsibility for the rational thinking supporting the emotions and the need to educate ourselves, we become responsible for our emotive responses.

1.5 Emotions as judgments.

A major reason for arguing that we should be responsible for our emotions is because emotions involve judgments that we make about the world. This has been argued for by Robert Solomon, one of the main philosophers to discuss emotion.⁴³ If forming judgments is an integral part of emotion, then emotions must be intentional to some extent. Our judgments involve a cognitive process and so we are responsible for them. These judgments are often normative or have a moral basis. Solomon gives the example of having one's car stolen. The anger that one feels towards the thief is based on the moral judgment that stealing is fundamentally wrong,

“my anger *is* that judgment...to have an emotion is to hold a normative judgment about one's situation”.⁴⁴

Our anger at being robbed is not an involuntary automatic reaction to being robbed like an allergic reaction, it is based on a belief that we have been wronged. We have an understanding of what it is to steal and why it is wrong. Our anger stems from this understanding. To illustrate this we can return to the example of abortion. Those people who have strong feelings regarding abortion, whether for or against, have those emotions based on moral judgments they have made. These judgments are informed and are not involuntary knee jerk reactions. In holding a strong emotional opinion about

⁴³ Solomon, R. (1980) “Emotion and Choice”, in *Explaining Emotions*, Eds. A. Oksenberg Rorty, University of California Press, Berkeley, Los Angeles and London, pp. 251-281.

⁴⁴ Ibid, p.257.

abortion, we have formed a moral judgment based on the information we have and our opinions of it. Another example of how emotions are judgments is emotional responses to fiction. If one feels sadness at Beth's death in Louisa Alcott's *Little Women*, it is due to a judgment that has been made about the book. If one did not enjoy *Little Women* and thought it dull or too sentimental, then one would not be affected by Beth's death. However if one identified with the characters and found the book interesting and likable, then one would be sad at Beth's death. One may feel depressed and even cry. This emotional response is surely a result of the reader's judgment of the book and of the book's characters. Furthermore, if one identifies with the book, the emotional reaction is also a result of a judgment of exactly what death is and how others will feel. When one reacts emotionally to Beth's death, one makes the assumption that Beth has really died and that the author won't write her in again. One feels sympathy for the grieving Jo based on a judgment of how one expects a grieving person to feel. Our emotional reaction to the fictitious death of Beth is a direct result of our judgments about the book and about how the situation would be in reality. This indicates that emotional responses are not completely involuntary phenomena. We make decisions about emotional situations based on the information and experiences we have available. If emotions involve judgments, it must be accepted that these judgments will be incorrect from time to time, leading to inappropriate emotions. What if the person stealing our car needed it to rush someone to hospital and intends to return it? If we later found out that this was the case we might cease being angry. This anger would cease because our judgment of the situation has changed. The fact that emotions can be inappropriate in this manner

demonstrates how emotions are lead by our assumptions and how emotions are therefore deliberate to some extent.

1.6 Rational Passions.

Another philosopher who offers a defense for the rationality of emotion is R.S. Peters. He claims that the 'rational passions' are proof that our emotions do involve reason.⁴⁵ Peters argued that to be impassioned by a rational situation indicated that some link was evident between emotion and reason. The concept of justice is one that is dear to a lot of people's hearts. It is a rational state as justice depends upon a fair judgment of a situation without prejudice yet the support of justice from groups such as Amnesty International is extremely passionate. Many individuals devote their lives to fighting for justice as lawyers, judges, protesters and pressure groups and have a sense of great indignation and anger when justice is not done. Peters claimed that if concepts such as justice and fairness are based on rationality and yet can involve such emotion, there must be some involvement of reason in emotion. To feel strongly about justice, one must have an understanding of what justice is, why it is important, what injustice means. To be aware of when a situation has been unjust, one must have some understanding of the situation and what injustice will mean in these circumstances. To feel that Nelson Mandela was imprisoned unjustly, one must understand why he was imprisoned, why this is unfair and what imprisoned means. Without this knowledge, one would have no idea of what justice or injustice really was and could have no strong feelings about it. Peters claimed that

⁴⁵ Peters, R.S. (1973) *Authority, Responsibility and Education*, Allen and Unwin, London.

“a person who proceeds in this way, who is influenced by such passions, is what we call a reasonable man”.⁴⁶

A potential problem with this theory is that one could claim that our ‘rational passions’ are often more passionate than rational. If one is passionate about a cause such as conservation, this may lead to biased opinions, diluting the reason involved. Our decisions become emotion based rather than reason based and become simply emotional responses. One might alternatively claim that the emotion we feel in our ‘rational passions’ is actually separate from our reason. One could argue that in such situations our emotion is triggered by our reason which remains cool and logical and that the two do not interact.⁴⁷ Both of these two arguments are weak as they cannot defeat the point that an emotional reaction has been triggered due to some form of rational process. If our sense of justice becomes more emotional than rational it has still been started by a rational understanding of justice. If we wish to claim that our emotional sense of justice is separate from our rational assessment of justice, this too shows the rooting of our emotional responses in reason as otherwise we could have no understanding of what justice is. The link between the emotional and the rational is inescapable, as our emotional responses in our ‘rational passions’ cannot exist without some understanding of the subject.

A possible counter argument to the idea that emotions involve judgments based on our knowledge is that one can read a history book without becoming emotionally involved. One can read of violent wars that we know really happened without feeling moved by them. A possible response to this is that it is harder to empathise with a

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Solomon, R. (1980) “Emotion and Choice”.

collective people or an individual whom seems distant from us. If for example we are reading of the murder of a Viking king, the king in question may seem distant from us. We are unlikely to know his hobbies or sense of humour or personality. He would not appear as a real person but simply a name in a book. History creates a distance from the event which may be why dry accounts of the event may not trigger an emotional response. If on the other hand we read a historical novel or film one may become more concerned with the event as we have an individual to relate to. Before the blockbuster film *Titanic* was released one would know of the tragedy and consider it sad without having any true emotions about the sinking. However once one has watched the film, one might absorb the event from a more personal perspective and consider the true tragedy that happened. It could be said that the lack of emotional response to history is a defensive mechanism. The true horror of the Nazi concentration camps may be too awful for many of us to take on board and it is possible that we have developed a feeling of distance from historical events to prevent us from becoming too involved, leading to a similar sentimentalisation of history as we have of nature.

1.61 Purposeful Emotions - Solomon.

A possible result of emotions involving judgments is that this implies that emotions are actions. Solomon argues that a judgment is an action; it is something we do. Actions have intent and aims, as do judgments. They are purposive and are used to affect the world around us.⁴⁸ If I sulk because I wanted pizza for dinner but my partner brought curry, the physical expression of my sulk will encourage my partner to ask me first before buying food or to go out and get the food I want. Solomon's argument is that

⁴⁸Wollheim, R. (1984) *The Thread of Life*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

this expression is aimed at not repeating the situation that has caused the emotion. If I feel guilty at how little work I have done, that guilt is purposeful in that I will intend to rectify the situation and work hard tomorrow. The emotions we have are aimed at particular objects or people who are involved in the situation that has lead us to experience the emotion and are intended to change or prolong the situation irrespective of whether it was a positive or negative emotion. For example, my guilt is aimed at my neglected work and at those who expect me to have done the work. It is then intended to force me to achieve more and to catch up with my work. Solomon's theory is that it is the purposes behind our emotions that encourage us to act and that each emotion has a purpose.⁴⁹

A problem that I find with Solomon's theory is that it too simplistic. To jump to the conclusion that emotions are actions misses out the fact that one can choose not to act on one's emotion. Part of the problem with Solomon's theory is that it is dependent on physical or verbal expression of emotion. I might decide not to sulk over the dinner although I am really not happy at not being asked what I wanted. I cannot choose to ignore my emotion but I can suppress my behaviour and reason with myself that it doesn't really matter and was merely an oversight on behalf of my partner. There is no doubt that emotional behaviour is often manipulative but emotional behaviour should be separated from emotions. I can fake tears or sulking just as I can suppress laughter or anger. Solomon's error is to fail to separate emotional behaviour from emotions. The only action involved in emotion is that an opinion is formed about the world. Any action resulting from that opinion is the result of a rational response to the emotion. Emotions

⁴⁹ Solomon, R. (1980) "Emotion and Choice".

can trigger actions but are not necessarily actions themselves. If we return to the example of the guilt of being unproductive we can see that the guilt felt at not having done enough work is not an action in itself but can cause the rational decision: I feel guilty at my lack of work - I should have done more - I will work really hard tomorrow. It is the rational thought process that results in the action. The guilt alone is not purposeful, it is reflective rather than progressive. If no action is taken then how has there been a purpose to the emotion?

Solomon's problem may be to do with the language he uses. The term 'action' implies a physical act. With emotions this is not appropriate as the emotion may not result in a physical act and if it appeared to, this might actually be a result of a rational response to the emotion. It would make more sense to say that Solomon means that the judgment involved in emotion is the action and that it is this action that enables the emotion to be purposive. If instead of using the word 'action' we concentrate on emotions being 'purposeful' we may be able to clarify the issue. I would argue that emotions are only purposeful in that we rely on them to shape our opinions and personality. When faced with a tricky dilemma one might suggest waiting to "see how they feel" before making a decision. We examine our emotions to decide what our purpose should be. The physical actions we make are results of rational or instinctive reactions based on emotional and rational background. If one feels depressed because the skies are grey one may act by warming the house and putting a film on. This is a decision that is not made by our emotions but by our reason. We believe the film will cheer us up and the warmth of the house will comfort us, it is not an emotional reaction. Our reason has purposes and intentions whilst our emotions involve judgments that we

make about the world that may be relied on at a later date to help us make a decision. One could argue that emotions may involve judgments and are therefore actions, but they are actions that only affect ourselves. They are aimed to affect our own world rather than other's. It is only when we allow those emotions to be expressed that they become actions that are used to affect the world around us. Solomon uses the example of the husband who uses anger to manipulate his wife into stopping sulking. The wife wanted to go out and meet friends whilst the husband wanted to stay in and watch TV. As they ended up staying in, the wife is sulking. The husband then becomes angry with her for sulking. Solomon argues that his anger is aimed to stop the wife sulking so the husband can watch TV in peace. What this example misses out is that it is the expression of these emotions that is purposive. If the wife had decided not to show that she was upset at staying in, there would be no aim to her emotions of boredom and disappointment. If the husband had not decided to show his anger, his irritation at his wife's sulking would only have affected him and his inner world. Each made a rational decision according to their emotions. The decision had physical purpose to change the situation whilst the emotion had the purpose of shaping the individuals personality and opinion but had no physical purpose or intention. Our emotions have the purpose of letting us know our situation. The rational decisions that are made in emotional situations have the purpose of changing our situation.

One objection that Solomon does address is that if emotions have a purpose, why do we resent our emotions and emotional behaviour? We often do not want to feel particular emotions or to let them show. If one feels jealous, one may feel ashamed of that emotion and try to dispel it. One may wish not to be in love or to be in grieving. If

our emotions are used to shape our opinions about the world, then resentment of these emotions is illogical. Solomon suggests three responses to this potential criticism.

Firstly Solomon claims that it is the situation leading to the emotional response which causes the resentment. If one feels jealous of a friend's exciting new job, one may feel guilt at being jealous of one's friend rather than being happy for them. If this is so it is not necessarily illogical to resent our jealousy as it is really our situation we are resentful of for making us feel this way. If I had been in a boring job for years with no prospects or chance of promotion whilst my friend had managed to get a well paid job in the field they wanted, the resentment I feel towards my emotions is not due to the emotions (although I am aware that jealousy is not a virtue), it is aimed at the circumstances that have caused me to feel this jealousy, i.e.: not liking my job. If I had a more pleasant job, I would not be so jealous of my friend. Therefore Solomon argues, my resentment of my emotion is directed towards my lack of a decent job.

The problem with this defense is that it does not acknowledge that some emotions are not desirable. If the resentment we feel is really directed at our lack of a decent job, then jealousy is not really a vice, it just demonstrates our own frustrations. This explanation is unsatisfactory. We do resent our emotions and not just the situations that create them. However if we consider that the purpose of emotions is to form opinions about the world, the idea that we can resent our emotions is not so strange. By feeling guilt at our own jealousy we learn that we wish we had got the better job and that jealousy is not a good emotion to have as it is selfish and makes us feel guilty. Through our emotions we make discoveries about ourselves which we may not necessarily like. No one likes to think of themselves as jealous. This is not illogical and is how we are

able to improve ourselves and how we can alter our emotional responses so that they are more appropriate the next time we are confronted with a similar situation.

A second defense that Solomon offers to the accusation that emotions are irrational is that emotions are “emergency responses” to a set of circumstances. They are short term reactions which reflect our personality and individual history. Our emotions are rational in that they fit in with our lives and experience and their purposes are therefore appropriate to the individual. It is therefore not the emotion that is irrational or its purpose but the individual who is experiencing the emotion. Humans are fallible and often illogical and our emotional responses reflect this. Supposing an individual has had their phone cut off for not paying their phone bill. They might phone the company and shout at the customer advisor who says that the bill must be paid before the phone can be reconnected. According to the individual this behaviour is rational. They do not want to be disconnected and are angry that they cannot get their own way and that the phone company is inconsiderate. However in reality this emotion whilst understandable is illogical, after all if the bill has not been paid it is inevitable that the phone would be cut off. It is therefore the individual rather than the emotion that is inappropriate. Individuals are biased and often illogical but their emotions are appropriate to them given the individual’s background. Solomon claims that the judgments involved in emotions are myopic. They only involve the individual’s point of view which may not be rational.

This defense by Solomon can be extended to explain why our rational decisions are often irrational. One problem with saying that emotions affect our judgments about the world and not our actions is that one could then say that all actions should be

logically thought out. If our emotions are what we rely on to help us form decisions about our actions, those actions must always be planned. Obviously this is not the case, we often act without thinking or planning. When we say that an individual has made a rational choice we mean that they have been using their own reason which may be wrong, biased or influenced by emotional judgments about the world. Humans are not computers and are often wrong. We may place more importance on some factors than we should or we may be unaware of other factors. If we return to the example of the customer angry at having their phone restricted we can see that the customer's 'rational' decision could be that they were intending to pay their bill soon and that as they usually pay on time, the phone company should not have restricted them. However they may leave out or place less importance on the fact that the phone company had no way of knowing that the customer was intending to pay or that the company could not possibly treat each phone account differently because of the number of customers involved. The customer has considered the reasons why they should not have had their phone restricted but has not paid attention to the full picture. There is a difference in the way 'rational' can be meant. We often assume it to mean an objective consideration of all available arguments. However when one says that one has rationally come to a decision this can mean something different; namely that one has thought about the issues involved based on our experiences, which could be wrong or biased. An individual's 'reason' may be unreasonable.

A third response given to the accusation that our resentment of our emotions is illogical is that this is due to conditioning. When one feels guilt about our jealousy it is because this is what society encourages,

“A society that likes ‘cool’ behaviour requires cool emotions”.⁵⁰

Outbursts of emotion are discouraged and emotions such as anger, jealousy and bitterness are frowned upon. Our society has a moral code of virtue and living in this society means that we need to try to stick to those virtues. When one feels guilty for being jealous, much of this guilt comes from the belief we were brought up with that jealousy is wrong. Just as our emotions are shaped by our experiences, our beliefs about our emotions are also shaped by experience. Our resentment of our emotions is therefore not illogical at all but a natural product of our upbringing and society. The fact that emotions are affected by conditioning emphasizes the idea that emotions are judgments. If emotions can be judged by society and if we attempt to alter our emotions accordingly, then emotions cannot be involuntary.

An objection to the idea that the purpose of emotions is to shape our opinions could be that one cannot have an emotion and be aware that it is practical. When the angry customer calls the phone company to get reconnected, they must believe their anger to be genuine and justified, otherwise they cannot truly be angry, it would just be a pretense to manipulate the sales assistant. Solomon claims this is similar to Nietzsche’s theory that if we are aware that our belief in God is due to a need for reassurance, we cannot truly believe.⁵¹ If we want to believe something, it is likely that we do not really believe it as if the belief was genuine, there would be no desire to believe, only belief. Solomon’s reply to this is that actions can be purposeful without the purpose being recognized. This is a topic that has often been mentioned by psychoanalysis's such as Freud who found that actions often had results that fitted in

⁵⁰ Ibid, p.266.

⁵¹ Solomon, R. (1980) “Emotion and Choice”.

with the individuals interests despite the fact the individual was convinced that there was no purpose to the action. This corresponds with the idea that emotional behaviour is “emergency responses” to situations. The purposes of emotion are not conscious or thought out but are “nondeliberate choices” one makes to deal with a situation.

Emotions involve judgments that we make about the world that help to shape our subconscious and conscious. They are part of the basis from which we make the decisions that govern our actions. By being shaped by our judgments about the world, emotions are able to be judged as wrong or inappropriate and are able to be altered.

1.62 Sartre.

Sartre is another philosopher who believes that emotions are essentially purposeful. He described the emotions as unreflective mental phenomena which return constantly to the affective object that triggered it.⁵² Unlike philosophers such as Janet and James who place emphasis on behaviour and the physical respectively, Sartre focuses instead on the conscious.⁵³ This means that in contrast to psychologists such as Freud, Sartre believes that we are always conscious of our emotions and their purposes but may sometimes refuse to recognize them. For example, Freud might argue that the anger one might harbor for one’s parents due to a bad upbringing is unconscious, that we are not aware that we are angry, whereas Sartre would say that we are conscious of our anger but are denying to ourselves that we feel it. In practice this is not a great distinction. According to each theory we do not believe ourselves to be angry at our

⁵² The following discussion is taken mostly from Solomon, R. C. (1981). “Sartre On Emotions” in *The Philosophy of Jean-Paul Sartre, The Library of Living Philosophers, Vol.XVI*, Eds. P. A. Schilpp, Open Court Publishing Company, Illinois, pp.211-228.

⁵³ James, W. (1984) “What is an Emotion?”, *Mind*, Vol.9, No.34, pp. 188-205.
Janet, P. (1889). *L'automatisme Psychologique*, Alcan, Paris.

parents, only with Sartre's theory we are in denial and Freud's we are unaware of our anger. Despite this similarity, Sartre does make sense in what he is saying. Freud's unconscious emotion only appears unconscious because we are in denial of it.⁵⁴ When a case such as an unhappy childhood is examined it seems unlikely that one was not conscious on some level of knowing one was angry. One would not be unaware that the childhood was unhappy even if one tried to tell one's self it was happy. The act of trying to convince one's self implies that there is a part that knows it was unhappy that is trying to convince itself otherwise. No matter how well we managed to convince ourselves there must always be a part of our conscious that knows the truth and that keeps the fantasy of the happy childhood alive. If this were not the case we would come to believe that our childhood was truly happy, we would feel no need to convince ourselves and would then realize the truth as the fantasy was no longer maintained.

The fact that we can be in denial of our emotions means that emotions are inseparable from the conscious and so emphasizes the point made in the earlier section that we always have some responsibility for our emotions.⁵⁵ One response to the claim that we should have some control over our emotions is that some emotions are unconscious and therefore if we do not know about our emotions, we cannot control them. If one was truly unconscious of being angry at our parents, we cannot be held responsible for it. We could not say that our anger should be dealt with or worked through as we would not know the anger was there. Acting angrily towards our parents would be acceptable and unavoidable as we would not realize we were acting in this way or why we were doing it. If we did not know why we were angry, we would not

⁵⁴ Fine, R. (1963) *Freud : A Critical Re-Evaluation of his Theories*, Allen & Unwin, London.

⁵⁵ Solomon, R. C. (1981). "Sartre On Emotions" in Eds. P. A. Schilpp, pp.211-228.

have any idea of what issues in our lives needed addressing. By arguing that emotions are always conscious, Sartre defeats this argument and thereby increases the responsibility we have for our emotions. If we are in denial of our emotion this may be difficult but is not impossible and any success at overcoming our anger would be praiseworthy. Any chance there is of controlling our emotions increases the responsibility we have for them and their associated behaviour.

Sartre also defines emotion as 'unreflective'. In doing this he describes 'unreflective' emotion as emotions without awareness of one's self. When one experiences an emotion, in the instant that the emotion is felt, one does not consider whether one is being reasonable or not. If one is angry because one believes that a friend has tripped us over, the anger does not consider whether this is truly the case. Our mind might have a reasonable voice telling us that it may have been an accident but our anger is separate from this. It is an instant response to a judgment. This idea of Sartre's that emotion is an immediate reaction is not in contrast to the concept that emotions involve judgments. The 'knee jerk reaction' is still based on a basic judgment, for example 'X tripped me'. Our emotions involve instant judgments and reactions to situations we find ourselves in. They are unreflective in that we do not stop to contemplate these judgments in detail. Our emotional reaction does not involve analyzing whether or not X really meant to trip us, whether we deserved it or if we are mistaken and actually tripped on something else, we do not consider that being tripped is really a minor problem and ultimately insignificant. We do not look behind the event that triggers our emotion but take it on face value and respond to it. Once we have considered the matter, our emotions may change. If tripping us was an accident and X is apologetic, we may

dismiss the incident and tell X not to worry about it, if it was deliberate we may become more angry. The judgments involved in emotions are immediate as are the feelings involved.

The purpose that Sartre believes emotions have is to help us manage our experiences in the world.⁵⁶ In a world that we often cannot control or understand, emotions enable us to react, to alter our internal standpoint. We can involve ourselves and give ourselves control by letting our emotions contribute towards our opinions, behaviour and purposes. Our emotions are the means by which we respond to the world. The difference between Solomon and Sartre is that Sartre sees emotion as a means by which we can avoid decision and action whereas Solomon believes our emotions enable us to respond to the world. Sartre believed that emotion was inferior to logical thought and that emotion was just a means of avoiding using logic.

Sartre cites two types of emotion which together form the purpose behind emotion. The first of these is when one is able to promulgate the information and/or situation we are confronted with and respond emotionally. The second type of emotion is those where the world suddenly reveals itself to be a certain way and our emotion reacts instantly. This distinction basically differentiates between an immediate emotional reaction to a situation (which is often referred to as a knee-jerk reaction) and an emotional reaction to a rational assessment. An example that illustrates both of these forms emotion is war. When one first considers the prospect of war in Iraq, one might well have an initial emotional reaction whether for or against based on a 'gut reaction'. This would fall into Sartre's second form of emotion of a 'knee-jerk' reaction. However when one considers the arguments for and against the war one may come to either a

⁵⁶-Solomon, R. C. (1981). "Sartre On Emotions".

completely different emotional reaction or a stronger reaction backed up by greater knowledge, hence falling into Sartre's first form of emotional behaviour. This is still an instant reaction but is a reaction that is better informed and is often construed from many emotional reactions as the information is taken in which results in an overall final emotion (and often opinion) about a situation. Differentiating between these two types of emotion is again important in attributing responsibility to individuals for their emotions. To be able to alter our emotions, it is necessary that they are not static but can be changed through education. This falls in with Sartre's description of emotion. The second form of emotion he describes, the 'knee jerk reaction' is the form of emotion that is most often inappropriate. If we return to the example of being tripped we can see that our immediate emotional reaction of anger may not be appropriate. However, by referring to the first form of emotion, we can see how our emotion can be changed once we become more aware of what really happened. We find that the incident was an accident and our anger dissipates. By showing how our emotions can be changed, Sartre proves that it is possible for us to alter our emotions and that we are therefore responsible for them.⁵⁷

1.7 Evolution.

A possible purpose of emotions is that they play an evolutionary role. Dawkins in his book *The Selfish Gene* presents a neo-Darwinist theory that all animals are programmed to protect their own genes even at the expense of other individuals of the same species.⁵⁸ By protecting our offspring, we propagate our genes. In order to protect

⁵⁷ Solomon, R. C. (1981). "Sartre On Emotions".

⁵⁸ Dawkins, R. (1989) *The Selfish Gene*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

our genes we need as many resources as possible. Dawkins would argue that it is this need for resources that creates our sense of justice and the need to protect our genes through our offspring that is ultimately responsible for our love for our children. When we are jealous, we desire something that would increase our chances of continuing our genes, a better job to provide more money, a bigger house etc.

The problem with this theory is that whilst there is undoubtedly a strong influence from evolution, humans possess free will and do not always have emotions in line with protecting our genes. An example of this is when individuals make a conscious choice to never have children. From an evolutionary point of view this completely contradicts our purpose in life. If we were completely controlled by instinct and therefore evolution, it would not be possible to make this choice. However even if an individual does decide to have children under the influence of evolution, most people today limit the number of children they have, given the appropriate resources. One could answer this by saying that this is to concentrate all available resources on one or two offspring to increase their chances of survival and propagation. However many people have more than enough resources to enable them to ensure the success of one or two offspring and would be sensible from evolutionary point of view to have more. The fact that we can choose not to illustrates that our actions are governed by free will rather than evolution or instinct.

A further problem with the theory that our emotions are driven by evolution is that we have emotions that do not benefit us or our genes. An example of this is the campaigns to save endangered animals such as the panda. The panda is an animal few of us in the western world will ever see in the wild. The extinction of the panda would

bring little damage or difference to our lives. Even if the ecosystem within which the panda's live collapsed, there would be no or little repercussions for the western world. Despite this there have been many campaigns in the UK to save the pandas. A lot of money has been raised and spent on breeding and protection programs to ensure the safety of the panda. It is something many people feel strongly about. Despite the fact that caring about the plight of the pandas would bring no increase in resources to the individual or help propagate our genes or indeed any human genes, we continue to have affection for the panda's and to feel protective towards them. The fact that we can have emotions that are not advantageous from an evolutionary point of view indicates that the purpose driving our emotions cannot be based purely or even mainly on evolutionary needs.

1.8 Conclusion.

In order to progress on to discussing the role of emotion in aesthetic appreciation, it was necessary to decide whether one can be held accountable for one's emotions. By doing this we have also been able to reach an idea of what emotions entail. Emotions involve judgments based on reason, knowledge and experience that are made intuitively with great speed. They are liable to change as we receive more information about a situation and are able to reassess. They are purposeful in that they shape our sense of the world and our place in it and have an essential role in guiding our lives. This ability to alter our emotions by gaining more knowledge about the situations in which we find ourselves shows that we can be held responsible not only for the

emotions we may experience but also for training and informing ourselves to respond appropriately.

Chapter 2 - Emotional Responses to Art.

In considering the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, it is first necessary to consider what role emotion plays in the 'traditional' aesthetic experience, namely art. Philosophical discussion concerning aesthetics, with the notable exception of Kant, has historically been mostly focused on the aesthetics of art, leaving the aesthetics of nature somewhat neglected. This focus on art has meant that there has come to be a far greater wealth of aesthetic theory concerning art than there is for nature. This means that the first place one should look for precedents of how the role of emotion in aesthetics has been described, is in regard to art. This chapter aims to examine how we are able to detect emotion in art and how we experience this emotion. As art is the form of aesthetic appreciation about which most has been said, it makes sense to look at what theories of emotion there are concerning the aesthetic appreciation of art in order to see whether any of these theories could be applied to the aesthetic of nature. This examination should assist us, in later chapters, to consider how we are able to involve emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and, by considering how the emotions are aroused, if they are appropriate. I will conclude this chapter by arguing that the emotions felt in the emotional response to art occur as a result of rational assumptions that the observer makes on the basis of the presentation of the artwork. In particular I will discuss Nelson Goodman's ideas regarding the languages of art whose theories regarding the way we respond to and learn about the world will also play a significant role in discussing the emotional aesthetic response to nature in later chapters.

2.1 Can one respond emotionally to art?

Before one can start trying to describe how emotional responses to art occur, it is first necessary to establish that emotion has a relevant role in the aesthetic response to art. It has been argued by some philosophers that it may not actually be possible to respond emotionally to art. It could be claimed that if one felt sad upon hearing a particular piece of music, this sadness would actually be because of our general mood and that in reality we gain no emotion from the actual art. If this were true it might well render this discussion irrelevant as if it is not possible to respond emotionally to art, which could have been created with emotion in mind, it would be even less likely that one could involve emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

An argument that helps prove the existence of emotion in the aesthetic response to art is the claim that it seems unlikely that emotion in response to art is impossible or even uncommon due to the sheer number of individuals who claim to respond emotionally to art. Even if some individuals feel no emotion in response to art, or if not all art triggers an emotional response, so long as there are some individuals who claim to respond emotionally to some art, then there is an emotional response that needs explaining. The language that we use about music and the passion with which some argue that they are able to respond emotionally to art indicates that this is true. It is not unusual to hear someone claim that they found a poem 'sad' or a piece of music 'moving'. Whole artistic genres have been named in relation to emotions such as the Romanticism period and Expressionisms. If art can never cause an emotional reaction, how can this language be explained? Why would it be common for people to say they

find a piece of music sad if they were not capable of finding it so? To be capable of describing a piece of work as sad we must believe that it is possible to experience art as sad, otherwise it would be a meaningless comment. It may well be that the manner in which we respond involves our general mood or opinions which may lead the response to be inappropriate, however it is not relevant at this stage to discuss the appropriateness of the responses, simply to establish if they are possible. Inappropriate or not, the testimony of those who claim to respond emotionally to art is enough to claim that even if the emotion felt is a direct result of the observer's mood and feelings rather than purely based on the aesthetic object, so long as the emotion has occurred as a result of the individual's exposure to the aesthetic object, it can be considered an emotional aesthetic response and therefore relevant to our discussion.

2.2 How Does One Respond Emotionally to Art?

Having established that it is at least possible to respond emotionally to art, one must now examine how it is that these emotional responses to art occur. In doing this I will be following Sharpe's lead in claiming that any emotion that is felt in response to art must arise due to either a factor relating to the artist which is somehow expressed to the observer, a factor in the art itself which expresses an emotion to the observer, a factor displayed by the performer which expresses an emotion to the observer or something about the observer themselves that makes them believe the artwork to be expressive of an emotion.⁵⁹ By having an understanding of what it is that the observer finds expressive about the artwork whether it be artist, object, performer or individual

⁵⁹ Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An Essay in the Aesthetics of Music*, Oxford University Press, Oxford.

association, we can come to an understanding of how emotion occurs in response to aesthetic objects.

2.21 Emotion from the Artist.

The first aspect of art that the observer could be responding to is the artist or an emotion expressed by the artist through the art. It is the artist who creates the artwork and it would therefore be logical to assume that they have in some way incorporated their emotional inspiration into the art. It may be therefore that when one claims that a poem is sad, one is referring to the emotion felt by the artist who created it. That, as proposed by Tolstoy,

“an artist feels a certain emotion and communicates it to an audience by arousing the same state in them via the artwork”.⁶⁰

Support for this idea can be found in the fact that art is often inspired by emotion. There are huge numbers of poems and songs that are written about love, all of which indicates that the artist is using art as a medium to express their emotions. If the artist had been inspired by unrequited love to compose a piece of music, it is unlikely that the resulting composition would turn out to be a happy dance. It is more likely that a feeling of sadness in the composer would result in a feeling of sadness in the music. Artists do use art to express their emotions on many occasions. This is easiest to see in forms of art that involve lyrics or prose such as a song whereas in a painting it may be less evident. Even in such a case however, the title of a painting or an artist’s comments on it can arouse an emotion in the observer which would not have occurred without the

⁶⁰ Goldman, A. (1995) “Emotions in Music (A Postscript)”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.53 No.1 pp. 59-69.

involvement of an artist. In such cases it would be appropriate to claim that emotional aesthetic responses to art occur as a result of the intent or emotion of an artist.

A potential problem with this is that not all artists feel emotional about their work. Not all artists involve emotion in their creations and even those that do may be driven by other inspirations or goals as well. Sharpe lists both Tchaikovsky and Berlioz as having claimed to feel no emotion when composing their music whilst some artists may well also work from pleasure of the form of art itself, a love of beauty. It may be that the music may turn out to sound sad to audiences when in fact the composer was just trying to find a melody they enjoyed. A composer could choose to write a joyful composition without having joyful emotions just as an observer can listen to and appreciate the composition as joyful, without feeling joyful themselves. Art often has a concept behind it and can reflect the artist's political ideas or an artistic concept such as Monet's 'shorthand' in his various paintings of his water lilies. Many artists would be insulted if it were claimed that their work was connected with emotion and nothing else. Neither Ibsen's *A Doll's House* or Tracey Emin's *Unmade bed* were created with either beauty or expression of emotion in mind so much as the portrayal of an idea or conviction. Political artists such as Radiohead or Bob Dylan would be likely to scoff at the idea that all of their work is centered purely on either beauty or emotion, even though these can be found in their work. The involvement of concepts in art further illustrates the point that it could be possible for an individual to respond emotionally to an artwork based not on the expression of an emotion by the artist through the artwork, but by being moved by the concept of the art. In such a case it would not really be correct for the artist to 'own' that emotion. Furthermore, although one could possibly

claim that the art was expressive of the concept, the emotional response to that concept as felt by the observer could only come from the observer.⁶¹ This indicates that although in some cases the emotion felt in response to art may be that expressed by the artist through the art, the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of art is not only connected to the artist.

Just as one may or may not be emotionally moved upon hearing an ‘emotional’ composition, the artist may or may not have been using art to express their own emotion. The fact that an artist can produce an emotionally charged composition without feeling the corresponding emotion and that one can have emotional responses to art which are not a direct result of the artist’s emotion means that the artist is not the sole cause of emotion in the aesthetic response to art.

2.22 Performer.

It could be argued that emotion can be expressed by the performer of art as in the case of an actress or musician.⁶² A particularly rousing performance of Handel’s ‘Messiah’ by talented and experienced musicians would be likely to arouse far more emotion than a wooden performance by students who are technically correct but lacking in confidence to add their own expression. Similarly, a school production of Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is likely to have far less emotional impact for an impartial observer (rather than a proud parent) than a production of the same play put on by the Royal Shakespeare Company.

⁶¹ Zemach, E.M. (1996) “Emotion and Fictional Beings”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.54, No.1, pp. 41-48.

⁶² Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An essay in the Aesthetics of Music*.

“Our appreciation of a great performance is not exhausted by our appreciation of the quality of the work; we also savour and admire the wit, intelligence, imagination, and insight of the performer”.⁶³

Part of what makes a good actor or musician is their ability to communicate the artist’s intended emotion to the observer. The problem that this automatically throws up is that the performer, regardless of talent, is simply following instructions from the artist.

Notation on the music the musician follows or on the script the actress reads dictates how they are to perform. The performer is not responsible for how the art is supposed to be performed. Therefore a performer could simply be following instructions and doing their job whilst appearing to produce an extremely emotional experience. This means that whilst the quality of the performer can certainly enhance the emotional aesthetic response, the emotion expressed is still essentially expressed by the artist. In the case of performed art, the performer is part of the art which is designed by the artist and therefore the emotion expressed by the art, and the performer, is that expressed through the art by the artist. Whilst it is doubtlessly true that a good performer is capable of heightening the emotional depth of a performance, it is also possible that one can respond emotionally to a piece of music to which the performer had not contributed any emotion of their own which suggests that the emotion found in art cannot primarily be attributed to the performer.

2.23 Observer.

As it is the observer who actually experiences the aesthetic response and therefore feels the emotion in response to the aesthetic object, it is obvious to look to

⁶³ Ibid, p127

them for the explanation of how emotional responses to art occur.⁶⁴ There are two major versions of the argument for the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of art being linked to the observer. The first of these is the Arousal theory approach which claims that an artwork is expressive of an emotion if and only if the observer responds to the artwork with said emotion whilst the second is the idea that the observer responds to art based on the associations the observer has placed on the aesthetic object.

2.231 Arousal Theory.

Allan Beever claims that

“the simple version of the theory states that a passage of music is expressive of an emotion if and only if it arouses that emotion, or possesses a tendency to arouse that emotion, in the listener”.⁶⁵

In other words the art is expressive because it is felt to be so by the observer, rather than that there is a certain pattern in the art that leads it to be interpreted in a certain way. Therefore according to Arousal Theory, if one was to feel romantic upon reading Shakespeare’s sonnets, the sonnets are then expressive of romance. It could be argued that Arousal Theory offers no real explanation of why the emotion is felt or how. Even if the theory is correct in saying that it is the emotion the observer feels that is the emotion being expressed, it still does not adequately explain how this emotion is provoked in the observer. It has no answer for why certain types of music tend to be described as sad or happy, or why the emotions provoked by a painting may tend to be similar in most observers. It never explains why the observer reacts as they do, just that

⁶⁴ Kivy, P. (1993) “Auditor’s Emotions: Contention, Concession and Compromise”, *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.51, No. 1, pp.1-12.

⁶⁵ Beever, A. (1998) “The Arousal Theory Again?”, *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.38, No.1, p.82.

they react. However such criticism misses the fact that the main point of Arousal theory, in holding that the observer's emotional response determines what is expressed by art, is philosophical analysis, rather than empirical psychology, and therefore it does not attempt to explain the response. The philosophical point is that there is no emotion to be found in art, but simply that any emotion attributed to art is actually that felt by the observer.⁶⁶

A serious problem for the Arousal Theory is that a piece of art may provoke an emotion in its observer which the art is clearly not expressive of. For instance the over popularization of Shakespeare's sonnet XVII has led me to find its opening line "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?", extremely irritating and not at all romantic. If according to Arousal Theory, art is expressive of the emotions it evokes, then surely sonnet XVII is expressive of irritation for readers like myself, not of love. On first impression it may appear correct that the emotion felt is the emotion expressed by art, but if one was to compare hearing emotive music to hearing someone speaking emotively it is possible to see the problem. If we hear a friend speaking happily about their new job we can be sure that they are expressing happiness even if we are feeling jealous resentment at their good fortune. According to Arousal Theory, the emotion that I am feeling would imply that my friend is feeling jealous too. An Arousal Theorist would answer this straight away by saying that responding to art is very different from responding to other people. Although this is a fair point, art can be used by an artist to express emotion. If the artist has created the art with the intention of expressing a particular emotion and yet the observer responds with a different emotion, Arousal Theory has no way to show how we can consider the artist's intended emotion as the

⁶⁶ Speck, S. (1988) "Arousal Theory Reconsidered", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.28, No.1, pp.40-46.

most relevant one. Again an Arousal Theorist would respond by claiming that not all art is created with emotion and therefore when it is not, this problem is dissolved. However the fact that the theory would fail in some conditions indicates that the theory as a whole cannot be considered an accurate description of the expressive nature of art.

Arousal Theory is also not consistent with the fact that one can be aware of an emotion in art without feeling aroused by it. If as with Shakespeare's sonnets, I am aware that they are meant to be expressing love but I do not feel emotionally moved, what explanation does Arousal Theory offer? If according to Arousal Theory, art is only expressive of an emotion if the emotion is aroused in the observer, then it cannot be possible for me to be aware of an emotion in art without feeling it. Certain works of art do not provoke emotional responses in some individuals even though the individual is aware of what is expressed. I am aware that Shakespeare's Sonnet XVII expresses love yet personally it does not affect me. I do not find it moving despite the fact that I am aware what emotion it conveys. In fact if one could not identify an emotion without responding to it, the issue of individual taste could be settled by claiming it was merely a question of education and that by explaining the emotions in Shakespeare's sonnet I could be convinced to change my mind about it and find it romantic. The fact that one can identify emotion in art without responding to it need not mean that there are no circumstances in which one can respond to that identified emotion. After all, surely one would have to correctly identify the expressed emotion before one could respond appropriately to art, otherwise one could be responding to the wrong emotion or an imagined one. Not all identified emotion will result in an emotional response but it is necessary for the identification to be made if one is to respond. If I was unable to

identify that Shakespeare's sonnets expressed love, if I thought they expressed anger, I could never respond appropriately emotionally. Whilst it is true that some individuals claim that they do not respond emotionally to art, this only means that emotional responses are not inevitable, that some may react emotionally whilst others do not.

The key point in this argument is that whilst it is possible and indeed common for observers to respond emotionally to art, it is possible to identify the emotion in art without responding to it. If one can recognize an emotion in art without responding, this means that emotion in art cannot exist purely because the observer 'feels' or 'imagines' it to be there. This means that whilst the role of the observer is important in the emotional response, there may be something independent of the observer which is involved in the emotion.⁶⁷

A possible response that could be offered to these problems is that individuals may not be aroused by the artwork or have inappropriate responses, but so long as the artwork has a tendency to arouse a particular emotion in observers, it is expressive of that emotion.⁶⁸ Therefore in recognizing the emotion in the sonnet without feeling it could be put down to the fact that I may be able to recognize that the artwork may have a tendency to arouse others or myself in different circumstances. However, what this does not explain is how I am able to recognize that others would be moved. If I can recognize that the sonnet has a tendency to move others, without being moved myself, there must be some property in the art that I recognize as expressive, independent of my own response to the art.⁶⁹ The line "Shall I compare thee to a summer's day? Thou art

⁶⁷ Matravers, D. (1991) "Art and the Feelings and Emotions", *British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol.31, No.4, pp.322-331.

⁶⁸ Speck, S. (1988) "Arousal Theory Reconsidered"

⁶⁹ Beever, A. (1998) "The Arousal Theory Again?", p.82.

more lovely and more temperate” does not move me yet there are hints to the poem’s expressiveness in it. I suspect that the comparison to a sunny, pleasant day is complimentary and can assume that the writer felt affectionately towards the subject. I am able to examine the form of the art to detect its expressiveness. If this is possible, then the expressiveness of the sonnet cannot lie purely in the individual who is aroused by the sonnet. They must be responding to this property in the sonnet, proving therefore that Arousal Theory cannot be an adequate explanation of how art is expressive.

“The arousal theory is false if recognizing and enjoying musical expression, in general, does not require mirroring responses”.⁷⁰

Arousal theory still does not adequately explain how emotions are provoked in the observer.

An interesting question for Arousal theory is what it considers to be art. Most modern theories of art are concerned to varying extents with the intent present in the art work; that in order for something to be considered art, it must have been created with some intent whether that intent was that the art work was expressive of some emotion or that the art should inspire the observer to respond in any way of their own or even with the intent that the artwork is ‘pretty’. If then, intent is a crucial factor in what one takes to be art, how is it that Arousal theory can neglect the artist’s intended emotion? The response to this that an Arousal Theorist would make is to say that Arousal Theory is simply a description of how the response occurs and therefore need not concern itself with how the aesthetic object is created. This defense unfortunately does not suffice. Arousal Theory claims that the emotion felt by the observer is the emotion expressed by the artwork which implies not only a description of the emotional aesthetic response but

⁷⁰ Ibid, p.87.

also a description of how an aesthetic object is expressive. By leaving out the artist from the equation, Arousal Theorists leave themselves open to a number of problems, the most important or illuminating of which is the fact that we can recognize the emotive qualities of an art work without responding to it. For this to be the case there must be something other than our own individual response that has a role to play in how and why we respond as we do. The Arousal theorist's bias towards the observer is neglectful of other important aesthetic factors and can therefore be dismissed as inadequate.

2.24 Emotion within the Artwork.

In the case where the emotion in art is not to be located in the states of the artist, the observer or the performer, it seems logical to conclude that there is something about the artworks themselves that expresses the emotion. Sharpe supports the idea that it is the artwork itself which is expressive of the emotion and illustrates this by using the example of a funeral march,

“When a piece of music is sad, we are not justified in thinking that the composer was sad when he created it, the performer sad when she plays it, or the listener sad when she hears it. It is the music itself which is sad”.⁷¹

In claiming that the ‘source’ of the emotion is the art itself, Sharpe adheres to the theory of Cognitivism. If an artist can compose a joyful composition without being joyful and the performer can play the music without being joyful and the listener can recognize the joy in the music without being moved to joy, it would be logical to conclude that the emotion is in the music itself. Therefore when we refer to a piece of music as joyful, we are referring to properties in the music that make it joyful. When we respond to music

⁷¹ Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An essay in the Aesthetics of Music*, p.9.

emotionally, according to Cognitivism, we are not responding to the emotion felt by the artist or claiming that the emotion present in the art is there purely because we feel it is there; we are responding to an element in the music that is expressive of emotion.⁷²

When we consider the theory of emotion discussed in the previous chapter and how emotion involves reason, it supports the idea that art can communicate emotion. If emotion and reason were linked then it would be logical for anything that triggers emotion as art does to involve both emotion and reason as well. If emotion involves reason then it is inevitable that we are able to express and interpret emotion in more complex ways such as art. Emotional responses to art are not knee-jerk reactions but are shaped by reason. We do not listen to The Beatles's 'Here comes the sun' and associate the lyrics with death as that would be illogical, there is no basis for such a judgment. Instead we interpret the lyric 'here comes the sun' as a happy comment on the coming of summer. This is similar to how our emotions are shaped in ordinary experience. In the previous chapter we looked at the example of abortion and how we form our feelings about such an issue. The views we have about abortion are not based merely on a gut feeling but on an understanding of what abortion is, what it involves and issues such as whether a twelve-week-old foetus can feel pain. The emotive responses we have to abortion are based on reason, experience and education as are our responses to art. Likewise the language used in art, the form it takes and the colours or notes that it involves appeal to assumptions or associations that we have learnt.

By considering how we use language, it may clarify how emotions can appear to be present in art and how we use reason in our emotional responses to art. Language can communicate emotion; we speak of our emotions and interpret another's emotions from

⁷²-Ibid, see chapter 2.

what they say. We claim we are happy or sad and talk to others about how and why we feel. Both language and art provide us with the opportunity to express emotion to others. One can express happiness both by telling others how happy we are or by composing a joyful piece of music. The fact that an artist can intend to express something through music and that it is possible for a listener to pick up on this expression, means that art is a form of communication.

A potential problem with Cognitivism is that it seems ‘sentimental’ or anthropomorphic to claim that the music per se is sad. It implies that the music embodies feelings, that the music itself creates and possesses an emotion that is present independent of the artist, which seems totally inappropriate. The ‘Pathetic fallacy’ as described by John Ruskin criticized the manner in which much art attributed emotion to inanimate objects instead of appreciating them for themselves. Ruskin illustrates this with the example of three men observing a primrose.

“So, then, we have the three ranks: the man who perceives rightly, because he does not feel, and to whom the primrose is very accurately the primrose, because he does not love it. Then, secondly, the man who perceives wrongly, because he feels, and to whom the primrose is anything else than a primrose: a star, or a sun, or a fairy's shield, or a forsaken maiden. And then, lastly, there is the man who perceives rightly in spite of his feelings, and to whom the primrose is for ever nothing else than itself-a little flower, apprehended in the very plain and leafy fact of it, whatever and how many soever the associations and passions may be, that crowd around it.”⁷³

⁷³ Ruskin, J. (2000) *Modern Painters III*, Elibron Classics, Montana.p.8.

The last man is the one who has the best response as it is free from sentimental projections that distort our image of the primrose whilst also appreciating the primrose for its beauty in an aesthetic sense. To consider the primrose as a star as Ruskin's second man does not afford the primrose appreciation for its true form and beauty. It could be said that the claim that art expresses emotion falls into the 'Pathetic Fallacy' as it appears that we are claiming that the music itself is emotional. To attribute emotion purely to art again detracts from the beauty and meaning of art and projects an anthropomorphic view of art that sees art as a responsive, 'alive' medium. Art ceases to possess value in itself for the merits it truly holds and comes to be valued for false reasons.

A response to this problem is to again compare art to language. Despite the fact that one uses language such as "I am sad" to express sadness, we would not claim that the sentence "I am sad" is, in itself, emotional, despite the fact that it is used to communicate emotion. It makes much more sense to claim that "I am sad" is expressive of sadness. This would not be considered anthropomorphic or sentimental as it shows language to be a tool that is used to communicate specific feelings, as are many forms of art. Art does not embody emotion, it merely is expressive of it. When we read Shakespeare writings on love we do not think about what emotional words we are reading and attribute their quality to the words themselves; we praise the writer who arranged the words so skillfully. A skillful artist can use art to express their emotion whilst the observer is able to interpret the emotion in art.

A potential problem for this idea is that just as the observer can recognize an emotion in the art without feeling moved, so artists do not always feel the emotion their

art appears to express.⁷⁴ As discussed previously an artist can deliberately compose a 'sad' piece of music without feeling sad themselves. This however can be used to support the idea that the aesthetic object, art, can be created to hold some kind of emotional meaning. If it were the case that emotion could only be present in art when it was the emotion felt by the artist, the emotion must be purely linked to the presence of an artist rather than being linked to processes that could be harnessed by the artist to make the artwork expressive of whatever emotion they wish. The fact that an artist can deliberately create an emotive artwork without feeling the emotion proves that there must be more to the explanation of how one responds emotionally to art than simply the explanation that it is due to the presence of an artist. Even though it is the artist that uses procedures to evoke emotions, it is the art that is the communicative tool and the observer who picks up on it.

2.3 How art communicates emotion - Recognition Theory.

A theory of music's expressiveness that exemplifies Cognitivism is the recognition theory as supported by Peter Kivy.⁷⁵ Kivy argues that art mimics human behaviour to express emotion. For example, when music is 'relaxed' the notes would be slow and languid such as a relaxed human would be rather than fast and high pitched. Kivy mostly refers to music in his theory and considers tempo and pitch to be highly important in the mimicry of human emotion. Our voices tend to rise in pitch when we are frightened or excited and tend to drop when we are relaxed or sad, whilst our heartbeat increases with excitement and drops when we are asleep or relaxed (which is

⁷⁴ Zemach, E.M. (1996) "Emotion and Fictional Beings"

⁷⁵ Kivy, P. (1993) "Auditor's Emotions: Contention, Concession and Compromise".

why we yawn when we are tired). Music reflects these trends as we would rarely refer to an extremely fast, upbeat track as 'solemn' but we might be prepared to call it 'excited' or 'passionate'. If one considers a sad piece of music and what makes the music feel this way, we find it is the pace of the track, its low notes and its minor notes that make it feel so melancholy. Lower notes can often feel 'softer' than high notes, leading to a feeling of relaxation or depression rather than anger or joy. Art such as paintings, photography and sculpture has the advantage of being able to depict situations that we are able to observe and to thereby interpret more easily than, say, a piece of music. If an artist depicts a woman crying it is not a giant leap to suggest the artist is showing her sadness. Despite this however there are two areas of expression in this type of art that are more complex. The use of both shape and colour are more abstract ways that artists can express emotion through art. Colour is, like high and low notes in music, one of the more obvious ways in which art is expressive. Our culture gives colour meaning. In China red is a lucky colour so one might well expect to find that it is used in a positive context in Chinese art. In most Western societies, red is associated with passion, danger and anger and is used accordingly in our art and society. Our road signs are red when giving warnings, as are our 'stop' signs at traffic lights. The use of colour in art to express emotion is common and powerful which lends itself well to the argument for recognition theory.

The use of colour in art to express emotion is, like the use of tempo and pitch, pretty obvious, however there is also the issue of shape to consider. Shape is often a less obvious behavioural factor in human expression of emotion. The favourite example for shape is the comparison of a slumped, unhappy figure and the 'weeping' willow tree,

however there are other equally good illustrations such as when an artist fills a canvas full of busy designs all overlapping each other. There is no way that such a picture could be described as relaxing and might well be more appropriately related to confusion. The fact that tempo, shape, colour and pitch are used so much in art suggests that they have important effects on human behaviour. It seems unlikely that this is a coincidence. If we truly consider what it is in a piece of art that makes us feel a certain way, it seems that recognition theory provides the answer that the artist has, either consciously or subconsciously placed clues to their inspiration through mimicry.

2.31 Problems for Recognition Theory.

One apparent problem with the recognition theory is that there are many of the more subtle emotions that are not associated with any clear behaviour which art can imitate.⁷⁶ As discussed, sadness is associated with certain colours and movements. However emotions such as regret or jealousy can be hard to differentiate from sadness as they have no behaviour that is particular to them. If, for example a friend feels regretful, as an observer, I can recognize my friend's generally unhappy mood, but without knowledge of the situation (which may enable me to guess that my friend is likely to feel regretful) or my friend expressing their regret through words, I have no way of knowing my friend is actually feeling regret. Jealousy may be associated with 'the green eyed monster' but there is no behaviour that is particular to it. If one is jealous one might be expected to behave angrily but an observer would have no way of recognizing the fact that one appeared angry or 'in a bad mood' and coming to the conclusion that one was jealous without having any knowledge of the situation. If it

⁷⁶ Ibid

were entirely possible to tell another's exact feelings from their behaviour, there would be less need for language. We would never have to ask (as we so often do) 'what's wrong?'. Our behaviour provides clues but cannot conclusively provide an insight to another's mind.⁷⁷

The claim that the more subtle emotions cannot be detected by one's behaviour alone need not be a problem for recognition theory. It has been claimed by Kivy that we can only respond with and to a range of basic 'garden variety' emotions.⁷⁸ Music can be sad, happy and hopeful but can it ever really capture more complex emotions such as regret? If an artist writes a composition with the intent of expressing regret, unless the listener is told the inspiration of the music, how would they know the music was regretful? This point is rather hard to illustrate satisfactorily but I believe if one thinks of one's own experience, it is possible to see that without further knowledge of a composition, one would not be able to discern the music's regret from its sadness. Songs, poems and often paintings are more able to draw upon clues that can hint at more complex emotions but music seems to be limited to suggesting just the positive and negative emotions of a generic kind.

Kivy would reply, however, that art *can* only express the 'garden variety' of emotions, so that the inability to express subtle emotions is irrelevant. If one can only recognize general emotions through behaviour, it is inevitable that any art that imitates this behaviour is going to be limited as well. Excluding plays, novels, songs and poems that have the distinct advantage of being able to use words, art has to rely on colour, shape, pitch and movement to express emotion. If one considers art one realizes that

⁷⁷ Robinson, J. (1994) "The Expression and Arousal of Emotion in Music" *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.52, No.1, pp.13-21.

⁷⁸ Kivy, P. (1993) "Auditor's Emotions: Contention, Concession and Compromise".

Kivy is correct as without a descriptive title that gives away the intent of the piece, most art is only expressive of a general mood. Anger, sadness, happiness and calm can all appear expressed in art alone without words. The fact that the anger would involve jealousy, that the happiness or calm would also be hopeful is harder to discern. In fact, the discussions by art critics surrounding individual pieces are often about the intended emotion or meaning of a piece. If it were possible for art to firstly imitate behaviour that clearly expressed complex emotions or to clearly express these complex emotions at all within art, there would be no need for such discussions. The intent of a piece would be completely clear. We would not need to discuss whether the artist's anger came from jealousy or righteous indignation, it would be obvious. To anticipate a potential criticism of this view, it is also worth saying that the claim that art can only express basic emotions need not stop artistic discussion at the point of saying the piece is happy or sad. Just because art cannot directly express complex emotions does not mean that it cannot be inspired by them. If not then there would be no need for the leading and sometimes controversial titles that artists give to their work. These titles are intended to provide direction in interpretation. Just as we ask an individual who is expressing sad behaviour 'What's wrong?', so we are able to inquire of an artist 'What was your inspiration for this work?'. Claiming that the emotions we can recognize in art are limited does not limit art; we just need to be able to examine it more closely.

Another alleged problem for the Recognition theory as identified by Speck in 'Arousal Theory Reconsidered', is that some of the emotions that are expressed in art "seem to have no counterpart in ordinary experience".⁷⁹

Speck claims,

⁷⁹ Speck, S. (1988) "Arousal Theory Reconsidered" pp.43

“The feelings expressed in Beethoven’s late quartets, for instance, often seem unfamiliar, as if the composer were able to explore entirely new emotional domains. It seems highly improbable that the listener could recognize these feelings from symptomatic resemblances”.⁸⁰

This criticism is problematic. If Speck is so unsure of what emotion Beethoven was feeling when he composed his quartets, then how can he know whether they are felt in ordinary experience? It is true, as previously discussed, that the more subtle emotions cannot be detected in music, but the concept that it is only the ‘garden variety’ emotion that one can detect in art does seem to create a situation where observers could identify emotion more easily. One can find the mood of Beethoven’s quartets and just because we may not be aware of the exact emotions lying behind them does not mean that they are any less meaningful.

If, on the other hand, Speck means that art often is used to express emotions that the artist has imagined but never experienced, such as in a play, then again I see no real problem for the Recognition theory. The artist has used imagination and knowledge of human behaviour to represent an emotion just as an observer would use imagination and knowledge of human behaviour to interpret the emotion in a work of art. An artist can use their experience of others emotions and observing them as inspiration to art. The fact that one can start to imagine another’s emotion based on our observations of their emotions again supports the recognition theory. Much of art is about observation of others and Speck’s criticism, as well as being unclear, is weakened by not recognizing this.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p.44

Another objection that Speck raises against recognition theory is that if emotion in art is expressed as an imitation of human behaviour, then it seems logical to say that art with language or human presence such as novels or theatre would be easier for people to respond to. It would be easier to detect the emotion and therefore such art would prove more popular. Speck claims that as this is not necessarily the case, recognition theory is flawed. The counter argument to this is that whilst the presence of both language and humans in art does make it easier to express a certain emotion through these types of art, this does not necessarily mean that they will be more moving, but that the emotion is likely to be more complex.⁸¹ Unlike in music where the artist is restricted to 'garden variety' emotions, a novel can describe a character's emotions in depth. We can be told the reason for them and exactly how the character experiences the emotion. Furthermore novels and plays rarely involve just one emotion as music does. There can be many characters with many changing emotions, all leading to a more developed insight into the expression of emotion.

A critic of recognition theory would be quick to answer this by saying that a more complex emotion is more interesting and is likely to provoke a greater response. This however still misses an important point. It is not just emotion that one responds to in art, it is also the quality of the work, its meaning and its beauty. Our judgment of a song is not based purely on whether we can interpret what emotion is being expressed, but on how well. If appreciation of art was based solely on emotion, I could claim that a simple love song by Westlife was as aesthetically valuable as Bob Dylan's 'Hurricane' or Beethoven's Fifth Symphony. I do not enjoy most popular music such as Boy bands. It is not that I do not understand what emotion they are trying to express in their songs

⁸¹ Robinson, J. (1994) "The Expression and Arousal of Emotion in Music".

(it is very clearly love), but because I find no beauty in the music or the singer's voices and I do not judge the lyrics to be well written or particularly meaningful. If a clear ability to interpret emotion is all that is needed to admire art, there is no logical reason for me to reject the dubious talents of the various manufactured bands. Beauty alone is also not always a strong enough factor to warrant appreciation either. As I have previously mentioned, Bob Dylan is an extremely talented songwriter who is known for writing many political or protest songs such as 'The times they are a-changin'' or 'Blowin' in the wind'. If appreciation of art was based solely on beauty it is likely that his music would not be so popular as despite the quality of his songs, it could be argued that his voice, whilst pleasant, is not traditionally beautiful. In reality this is overlooked because of the quality and subject matter of his music, proving that there is more to art than beauty or emotion. In discussing the importance of emotion in art it is important not to forget that there are other important factors in appreciating art. One can find a piece of music absolutely delightful without having the faintest idea what it is about. However, if one has a piece of art that is emotionally expressive, beautiful and meaningful, it is likely to be even more moving. This explains why different types of art appeal to different types of people. One generally finds that one responds more to art when one finds it appealing. It is possible of course to claim that the expression of emotion in art and these factors overlap and this is undoubtedly true, but this does not mean that easily interpreted or emotionally more complex art is more emotionally appealing as such types of art may not always have the most beauty or meaning.

2.4 A Combination of Theories.

A problem for both Cognitivism and Recognition theory is that although it may be the artwork that is expressive, that expressiveness could not occur if it were not for the artist. If there are definite signals that exist in art to guide the emotion felt by the observer, then those signals must have been placed there by someone who knew what they meant. The up-beat song "Here comes the sun" is not just expressive of happiness and optimism itself, it was created to be so. If this is the case, although one could still claim that it is the artwork which is expressive of the emotion and can explain how it is that this emotion is expressed through the art, it cannot be forgotten that in such a case it is the artist who is ultimately responsible for the existence of the emotion.

One theory that manages to cover the various roles that the artist, the observer and the aesthetic object all have to play is the theory Allen uses in his paper "The Arousal and Expression of Emotion by Music" which illustrates how reason and emotion in art are linked, describing the three main ways in which we respond emotionally to art.⁸² He claims art can evoke emotions, communicate emotion or provoke emotion. Evoking emotion is the mirroring response to art where the sadness of the art we are responding to evokes sadness in ourselves whereas communicated emotion is where we are aware of the emotion the artist has tried to convey and respond to that emotion in that context. For example if one was listening to W.H.Auden's Twelve Songs, one would be aware of the extreme sadness Auden was probably feeling when writing the poem and could therefore feel not only sadness but possibly sympathy or empathy with Auden. The third way of responding emotionally to art by provoked

⁸² Allen, R. T. (1990) "The Arousal and Expression of Emotion by Music", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 30, pp. 57-61.

emotion is when one feels a directed emotion that is not to be found in the art but is a response to the art itself. One might, for example, be moved emotionally by the beauty of a piece of music without knowing what it was about or a joyful love song might make one feel sad about one's own love life. If it is possible that such knowledge or associations can guide our emotional reactions to art, then reason and intelligence are involved in the arousal of emotion through art. As we can see in the example of Auden's poem, we are capable of responding in one, two or all of these ways to art at once.

“What usually happens in listening to music is that two sets of emotions, or of emotions and moods, are aroused in us: (a) those which the music *evokes* or *communicates*; and (b) those which it *provokes* about the mood or emotion which it evokes or communicates”.⁸³

One can feel sadness mirroring that in ‘Twelve Songs’ as well as the sympathy for Auden. At the same time one is also capable of appreciating how well Auden captures grief and can feel further moved by this ability and the realism of the poem. Allen's theory is attractive as it allows firstly for the idea that we may be responding to an emotion that an artist has aimed to express through the art, secondly for the idea that there maybe something in the art which is communicating an emotion to us as in Cognitivism and Recognition theory and thirdly that individuals may sometimes respond to art with emotions which are more to do with their own life experiences and opinions than that of the artist.

⁸³ Ibid, p.59.

2.5 Relativism and 'Languages of Art'.

A major theory that is in many ways related to both Recognition theory and Cognitivism is Nelson Goodman's, which argues that there is a language of sorts in art to which we respond and use to judge art both aesthetically and critically. Goodman talks in his book *Languages of Art* about the fact that artists often communicate ideas or themes through representation.⁸⁴ He argues that by exploring the modes of representation used in art, one can come to have an understanding of the more complex concepts that an artist might try to convey, such as emotion, and therefore have a greater understanding of how one is able to respond emotionally to art. Goodman starts his explanation by explaining that it is not resemblance that is the real issue. He claims that for art to represent an object such as a fruit bowl, it is a matter of denotation that enables the observer to identify what the artwork has been created to represent rather than how closely the artwork appears to resemble to original object. Goodman wants to differentiate between resemblance and representation claiming that,

“an object resembles itself to the maximum degree but rarely represents itself”.⁸⁵

The basis therefore of how we judge art is not a simple matter of how much the artwork resembles the object or emotion it represents, there is instead another system of symbols that must necessarily be examined. Goodman claims that objects are classified and labeled, that we have a system of organization that we use not only to identify objects but to understand them as well. Goodman argues that

“there is no innocent eye... what it sees is regulated by need and prejudice”.⁸⁶

⁸⁴ Goodman, N. (1976) *Languages of Art*, 2nd Ed., Indianapolis, Hackett.

⁸⁵ Ibid, p.4.

⁸⁶ Ibid, p:7.

The point that Goodman is getting at here is that although there may be as Recognition theory suggests, some aspect of the artwork that we recognize to represent the original object, the definitions of objects that one must have in order to recognize an object is not necessarily innocent or free. The labels which we assign objects, that enables us to recognize them, are created by us rather than imposed on us by the object itself. Therefore, when we look at a still-life painting and ask how realistic a representation of the original object the painting is, we make the final judgment based on our assessment of the symbols that are used to denote the original object based on the labels that we have placed on the original object. We judge the quality of the representation in terms of how we expect the original object to be portrayed. Goodman illustrates this point using the example of nature:

“Representational customs, which govern realism, also tend to generate resemblance. That a picture looks like nature often means that it looks the way nature is usually painted.”⁸⁷

Representation is, therefore, more complicated than a simple case of mirroring.

One way in which an artwork may be representative is through exemplification. This is an aspect of the artwork that not only refers to the original object that is represented but also possesses a quality of the original object being referred to. Goodman argues that the difference between possession and reference is that reference is not intrinsic to the artwork whereas possession obviously is. Goodman introduces here the idea of metaphor. In metaphor, unlike ordinary exemplification, the representational object does not literally possess anything of the original object, but instead does so in an extended sense. Goodman’s main points so far can be summed up as follows:

⁸⁷ Ibid, p.39.

“A glue factory may typify glue-making, it exemplifies being a glue factory literally rather than metaphorically... to express being a glue factory it would have to be something else, say a tooth pick plant.....In summary, if *a* expresses *b* then: (1) *a* possesses or is denoted by *b*: (2) this possession or denotation is metaphorical; and (3) *a* refers to *b*”.⁸⁸

From this point then we are able to move on to what Goodman says about emotion and how emotion is expressed through art. For Goodman, expression is metaphorical exemplification.

“A picture literally possesses a gray colour, really belongs to the class of gray things; but only metaphorically does it possess sadness or belong to the class of things that feel sad”.⁸⁹

Just as in terms of representation, the use of gray as expressive of sadness is a result of the metaphors that are present in our language and therefore in the definitions of objects and emotions that we design. Goodman wants to dissolve the idea that the emotional is not cognitive, and to hold that

“aesthetic and scientific experience alike are seen to be fundamentally cognitive in character”.⁹⁰

Emotion, therefore, as an important part of the aesthetic experience is cognitive. This is not to say of course that an aesthetic response is automatically emotional, simply that emotion in the aesthetic response is an important aspect worthy of serious discussion. The emotions are in general based on cognition and therefore it is only logical that in terms of aesthetics they should also be cognitive. This is also not to say that emotions

⁸⁸ Ibid, pp.91-95.

⁸⁹ Ibid, p.51.

⁹⁰ Ibid, p.245.

are not felt and are purely a logical judgment, simply that cognition is the tool that enables the observer to recognize the expressive qualities in the art in order for an emotional response to occur. The question must then become, how does art express this emotion to the observer? Our emotional experiences are connected to the symbolism in the artwork that we respond to. It is therefore useful to recall Allen's theory regarding the three possible types of emotional response to see how this would occur. Allen mentions evoked emotions, communicated emotion and provoked emotion, all of which can be related to Goodman's idea concerning the denotation of emotion through art.⁹¹ If emotion is expressed by an artist through art, the way in which this is done is by using metaphors linked to the definitions we have in our language regarding the emotion. The observer, by sharing the language can interpret these metaphors and either mirror the emotion expressed in the art, respond emotionally to the emotion communicated through the art by the artist or through associations with the expressed emotion in the artwork. This is a system that is cognitive and based on recognized 'language' in art with the emotion felt as a result of this cognitive process. These emotions are not necessarily separated or clear cut. Just as a definition of an object is dependent on the definitions of related objects, so any emotion is connected to emotions concerning related issues to the artwork. Even a subtle emotion in an artwork can be significant and is in no way to be considered less significant than a dramatically emotional response to art. The emotional depth of an artwork is not necessarily reflective of the merit of an artwork.

Having argued that the emotional aesthetic response to art is based on a cognitive recognition of metaphors in the artwork, one can go on to argue that this could be possible in the emotional aesthetic response to nature. Although there is no artist in

⁹¹ Allen, R. T. (1990) "The Arousal and Expression of Emotion by Music".

nature to design nature with emotional metaphors in mind, there is just as much evidence of metaphors, associations and symbolism in nature as in art. The next chapter, therefore, will attempt to argue firstly that the aesthetics of both art and nature are similar enough that their respective theories may be usefully compared, that their differences may illuminate some of the difficulties of doing so and finally to discuss some of the theories explaining the aesthetic response to nature so that the phenomenon is better understood, allowing us to continue on to discuss the role of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature.

Chapter 3 - Comparing the Aesthetic Appreciation of Art and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature.

The aim of this chapter is to argue firstly that the aesthetics of art and nature are similar enough in character that the theories of one may be applied to the other in an attempt to find a starting point in understanding the role of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature and secondly to examine the various descriptions that have been offered regarding the aesthetic response to nature in order that the reader is more aware of the background of the aesthetics of nature and in order that the phenomenon be better understood. In the previous chapter we examined the role emotion plays in the aesthetic appreciation of art in the hope that it would assist us in understanding the role emotion plays in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Before I can start applying artistic theories to natural aesthetics, I must demonstrate that the relationship between the aesthetics of art and nature is close enough that some theories may be applied to both. If we cannot establish a significant link between the aesthetic appreciation of art and nature, then it would be inappropriate to assume that the theory surrounding them could be connected. It is therefore necessary to enquire into the relationship between the two different types of aesthetic experience. Is it the case that, as the 'classical view' holds,

“artistic and natural beauty are in fact two species of the same genus, perfection of form, with artistic beauty simply imitating natural beauty”⁹²

Or are they, instead, two totally separate phenomena that cannot not be meaningfully compared?

⁹² Crawford, D.W. (1993) “Comparing natural and artistic beauty” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal & I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, p.184.

3.1 Comparing the Aesthetics of Art and Nature.

3.11 Framing art.

The first difference that needs to be resolved when comparing art and nature is that art is 'framed' whilst nature is not. In art we are shown a selected scene chosen and created by the artist whereas in nature we are free to choose our own perspective. The most obvious point to be made about the 'framing' of art is that there is a controlled perspective to art.

"A natural object is said to be an indeterminate form. Where it stops is putatively ambiguous. But with artworks, there are frames or framelike devices (like the ropes and spaces around sculptures) that tell you where the focus of artistic attention ends".⁹³

We are shown something or given something to listen to which exists apart from other things. There are definite boundaries to works of art that are prescribed by the artist, whether this boundary is a frame around a painting, the beginning and ending of a song or the space around a statue. The artist presents us with a determinate viewpoint, or determinate set of viewpoints that we cannot alter. We cannot investigate what lies over the horizon or just out of frame.⁹⁴ It is not up to us to decide what to admire, we are shown something such as a painting that is chosen by the artist. When we see Matisse's 'The Snail', we are presented with the picture. There is no debate over what is included physically in the painting and what lies outside of it. The boundaries of what one should be considering if one is to consider the painting are clear. In contrast, when we consider

⁹³ Carroll, N. (1993) "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History", pp. 247.

⁹⁴ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature", in *Landscape, Natural-Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal & I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 228-243.

a natural scene, there are no limits to what can be involved. We are surrounded by nature; it is not placed in a frame for us to observe, it has no limit. One does not even have to observe an entire scene when appreciating nature. When appreciating the form of a flower we often do not take its surroundings into account and can appreciate it separately from the plant next to it. When appreciating a rose we can choose to appreciate the form of the flower itself, the beauty of the entire plant or the rose plant and its surroundings, the choice is ours. Budd claims that

“The fact that an object is to be appreciated as a painting means that its weight is irrelevant, as are its smell, taste, and felt warmth or coldness; but the fact that an object is to be appreciated aesthetically as a river or as a tree in itself rules out no mode of perception nor any perceptual aspect of the object”.⁹⁵

There is no artist to dictate what we include and so we are free to place the boundaries of consideration wherever we choose. Even when we consider unframed art such as a statue that is placed in a natural environment, we still tend to separate the statue from its surroundings in a way we do not tend to with a blade of grass or a pond. In art our attention is focused on a specific point that is distinct from its surroundings. When we appreciate nature we are considering an entire scene that surrounds us.

Shaftsbury wished to resolve the problem of framing by placing nature on a pedestal. He argued that our aesthetic perception of nature should be taken from such human created viewpoints as a balcony or patio.⁹⁶ This would, in his view, enable us to become more separate from nature and so create a frame for nature that dictates what

⁹⁵ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, Oxford University Press Inc., New York, p.109.

⁹⁶ Berleant, A. (1993) “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature” and Kemal, S. & Gaskell (1993) *Nature, Fine Arts, and Aesthetics in Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal & I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 1-42.

and how we appreciate nature. The problem with this solution is that it is not always possible to place nature on such a pedestal. A difference between art and nature that is highlighted by the discussion of framing, is that nature is dependent on its surroundings in a way that art is not.⁹⁷ As natural objects interact with each other and are interdependent, it is more difficult to consider one natural object apart from its surroundings. On considering a tree, it is difficult not to take into consideration its position or light. It is also unlikely that we would separate the tree in our view from the earth holding its roots or resent resident birds for interrupting our view of the tree. It is rare for us to be able to appreciate a natural object without involving its environment at all. We consider the whole view we have available to us not just the limited view the artist presents us with. In an art gallery however, each piece is presented separately. The buildings are generally designed to allow us to consider each work of art individually without distractions from garish wallpaper or dimmed lights; the focus is purely on the art. The pieces in a gallery have no interaction with each other or effect on each other's growth or perspective. There are of course occasions where there are series of paintings created with a common subject, which can lead to each painting having an effect on how one views the next. An example is Monet's series of paintings of water lilies which enable one to see the artist's methods and intentions fully and therefore heighten one's appreciation and understanding of Monet's larger canvases at the end of the display. The problem with using this example as proof that artworks interact with each other is that it could be argued that each painting in a series is actually a part of a greater piece of art. If an artist has created a series of paintings, which rely on one another for their full effect, then the reason the paintings interact is because they are part of the same work. There

⁹⁷ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature".

have been artists who have attempted to bridge this gap and create art that is not 'framed' or limited. Lucio Fontana attempted to overcome the restraints of the canvas by slashing his canvas with a knife in a 'Spatial concept "Waiting" (1960). However this canvas is now displayed in a glass case against a white wall in the Tate Modern and so is still limited to being considered as a single piece rather than interacting with its environment. We are still restricted in what we take into consideration.

Another possible method of resolving this difference between art and nature is to claim that there is art such as environmental art or gardens that do not have definite boundaries or limitations to what can be included.⁹⁸ For example, one would find it difficult to separate the aesthetic appreciation of the situation of a tree in a garden without involving consideration of the light that was on it. One cannot prevent wildlife such as birds entering the garden which enhance the aesthetic experience yet do not count as part of the design of the garden. The changing weather and sky also contribute to the appearance of the garden and yet are not a controlled aspect of the garden. It is possible therefore to claim that there are a few areas of art where there are fewer boundaries and what one brings into considerations is less controlled. Furthermore, as previously mentioned, one can appreciate single items of nature rather than an entire scene. One can focus on a butterfly and ignore its surroundings or appreciate a tulip flower but not its leaves. We are able to include all of nature's surroundings and various factors but it is not compulsory to do so. Just as we are able to pick and choose our viewpoint, we are able to select what detail one includes.

⁹⁸ Ross, S. (1993) "Gardens, earthwork, and environmental art" in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal & I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 158-182.

The problem with this response is that even in a garden where one may have much more open boundaries, there are still the boundaries of the garden to consider. What is within the garden has been planned, tended and altered by humans. The light, wildlife, weather and other external factors may change but we are able to either appreciate the effects these have on the art that has been created or appreciate them for themselves in terms of nature. We are still able to separate those factors that have been altered by humans and those that have been altered by nature. Our ability to list which factors could be considered natural and those that cannot indicates in itself that we are able to perceive the difference when appreciating a garden. There may therefore be less obvious boundaries in gardens, thereby illustrating that art and nature can be closely intertwined, but the fact that we are able to separate them and compare them at such close quarters also helps to demonstrate the differences between them, resulting in a boundary of their own.⁹⁹ The counterargument to this is that one can choose a view to some extent in art too. One can choose to examine one feature of the work in detail and to ignore other features. One can choose to focus on a particular aspect of art such as the concept behind the art, the techniques involved in creating the art or the use of colour or form. For example, when observing Michelangelo's 'David', one could choose to only examine a toe rather than observing the whole statue. However if one was to do this, one could not say that they had seen the statue. One would have only seen the toe. If one was to separate off any of the factors involved in art at will, then the appreciation is no longer truly focused on the art and cannot be said to be an aesthetic appreciation of art.

If in art, one can observe without boundaries (as in a garden), and also appreciate specific items such as a rose in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, then it appears that

⁹⁹ Ibid, see pages 174-178 in particular.

the difference of art having set boundaries and nature having none is less important. However the problem with dismissing this contrast is that it would overlook a significant point; in nature we can choose where we place our boundaries of what we observe such as when we examine a rose or contemplate an entire view without boundaries whereas in art the presence or lack of boundaries is dependent on the art itself.¹⁰⁰ If we are watching a play, our attention is on the stage, not the audience, if we are looking at a painting, our line of vision is focused within the picture frame. The occasions when we are free to involve outside interests in art, are only those suggested or allowed for by the artist. In a garden it is expected that there would be some interaction between what the artist has contributed and nature. When considering the theory or events surrounding a painting, it is the artist that has originally involved that theory or reminded us of that event. In a garden our focus tends to be on the garden: the plants within it and the design of the garden. Even when we are admiring external factors such as the light, we tend to view the external factor in how it complements the factors contributed by the artist. The major point in this discussion is actually that we are freer to decide on what view we take in nature than we are in art. Budd explained this by saying

“That natural items are not designed for the purpose of aesthetic appreciation releases them from the constraints governing the artistic appreciation of works of art: categories of art prescribe the appropriate manner of artistic appreciation as categories of nature do not prescribe the appropriate manner of aesthetic

¹⁰⁰ Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An essay in the Aesthetics of Music*.

appreciation of nature. The aesthetic appreciation of nature is thereby endowed with a freedom denied to artistic appreciation”.¹⁰¹

The aesthetic appreciation of nature is therefore free in a way that the aesthetic appreciation of art can never be.

3.12 Immersion in Nature.

Another difference between the aesthetic appreciation of art and the aesthetic appreciation of nature is that art is aimed at one or two senses whereas nature can engage them all.¹⁰² When observing art such as a painting, the focus tends to be on the visual and with music on the hearing. Nature surrounds us and therefore assaults not only our sight and hearing but also warms us or touches us in some ways such as the wind. Art tends to be constant whereas nature is an ever changing canvas. A possible example of this is if we compare admiring Monet’s water lily paintings with admiring a real water lily pond. The paintings may be beautiful but they interact only with our sight and possibly our intellect. The real pond on the other hand not only involves the visual but also the experience of being able to touch the water, of being able to choose our own viewpoint and to enjoy the sun whilst appreciating the scene before us. Monet’s paintings may have been painted in different lights and from various angles but he still would not have been able to capture every change in light that occurs or every creature that ever interacts with the habitat. The two aesthetic scenes are very different in that the real natural scene has the constant potential for both change and involvement.

¹⁰¹ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, p.108.

¹⁰² Hepburn, R.W. (1967) “Contemporary Aesthetics and the Neglect of Natural Beauty” in *British Analytical Philosophy*, Ed. B. Williams & A. Montefiore, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, pp. 285-310.

A solution to this problem of nature engaging more than one sense at a time is that art can also assault more than one sense. A play can involve poetry, music and visual art. One can enjoy the scenery of a play or the costumes as well as the script and the story. Furthermore, art tends to engage the intellect more than nature does. The theories and concepts that have inspired or influenced the artist can be considered in a way that is not possible in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. We can analyze the meaning of the art and discuss what the artist was aiming for. The lack of artist in nature means that this engagement of the intellect is not as common in nature. A response to this is to claim that it is possible for us to consider the science surrounding nature thereby also involving the intellect.¹⁰³ It might be less common for us to automatically involve science in our aesthetic appreciation of nature than it is to involve art theory when appreciating art but it is no less relevant. If it is acceptable to consider Expressionist theories when considering Monet's work, then it is acceptable to consider evolution when considering a lily. However, the point still remains that although it is possible for art to assault more than one sense, it still tends to only be aimed at one whereas nature can assault them all. This difference between art and nature is actually a further illustration of Berleant's point that the aesthetic appreciation of nature is freer than the aesthetic appreciation of art.¹⁰⁴ In nature, due to the fact we can choose what we involve in our appreciation, we can choose to concentrate on only one sense if we so choose. It is of course possible for us to consider the wind on our faces, the view around us and the sound of the birds singing but it is just as common for us to enjoy a single

¹⁰³ Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.37, pp.267-275.

¹⁰⁴ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature".

item such as listening to the bird song through the window whilst working. In nature we are free to either consider every sensory stimulus or to concentrate on a single sense.

3.13 Disinterestedness

The next alleged difference to be found between art and nature is that our deeper involvement with nature means that it is harder for us to be disinterested in the aesthetic appreciation of nature than it is in the aesthetic appreciation of art. Kant argued that in order to have a true aesthetic experience, one must consider the aesthetic object from a detached, disinterested point of view free from practical considerations.¹⁰⁵ In other words; in order to see a statue's true beauty, we must consider only the form of the statue and not become sidetracked by irrelevant or selfish thoughts such as the statue's cost but be focused on the beauty of the aesthetic object. This is obviously a problem for the aesthetic appreciation of nature as we are more involved; we are part of nature and therefore it could be argued that we are connected to nature in a way in which we can never be to art.¹⁰⁶ Kant actually argued that it was harder to be disinterested in the case of art than in the case of natural beauty, however the problem with this is that nature is so greatly shaped by humans that there is now no or little wilderness left and we therefore can never truly separate ourselves from nature in the way we can with art. Berleant argues that Kant's theory of disinterestedness cannot apply to the aesthetic appreciation of nature, as part of the beauty of nature is how it affects us. It would be sentimental to admire a thunderstorm as being merely 'pretty'. Being struck by lightning can be fatal and to forget this would play down the power of the electric display. In fact

¹⁰⁵ Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgment* (Translated by W.S. Pluhar) Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis/ Cambridge.

¹⁰⁶ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature".

part of the thrill of the thunderstorm is that it is potentially dangerous to us. That we could get struck by lightning, adds to the dramatic effect of the lightning streaking across the sky. Berleant furthermore claims that disinterestedness has been redundant

“since the impressionist’s dissolution of represented objects into atmosphere and of art objects into perceptual experiences, the visual arts have increasingly followed the nonconfining pattern of the other arts”.¹⁰⁷

If this is true, this would mean that disinterestedness need not be such a problem for the aesthetic appreciation of nature as art has started to attempt to create art that absorbs the observer in an interested manner.

The problem with Berleant’s complaint is that it misconstrues Kant’s concept of disinterestedness. It assumes that Kant meant that one cannot be involved at all in the aesthetic experience and must stand apart from all considerations. Kant believed that a true aesthetic experience was one that appreciated the natural or the art object for its own merits. An example of this is to say that it would not be relevant when admiring a Monet to consider how much it is worth in monetary terms, one should instead be focused on the form of the art. Without this absorption in the art, the experience can no longer correctly be referred to as aesthetic as it is no longer about the art. Even in the example of the lightning storm, if one were to focus more on the danger of the storm than the drama of the storm, one’s experience would cease to be aesthetic. It would no longer be about the impressive lightning display and would be instead a consideration of the science or danger of the storm. Berleant’s claim then, that nature, unlike art cannot be disinterested can be dismissed as a misunderstanding. However it does raise the next

¹⁰⁷ Ibid, p.232.

problem that one might claim that we are more involved in the aesthetic appreciation of nature than art.

3.14 The sublime.

A major problem with aligning art with nature is that our involvement with nature allows for a sublime aesthetic experience in a way that is rare or even impossible in the aesthetic appreciation of art.¹⁰⁸ Some philosophers such as Adorno argue that it is only when appreciating nature that one may have what Kant would describe as a sublime aesthetic experience.¹⁰⁹ Kant believed that within the 'Judgment of Taste' there are two categories: the sublime, and the beautiful.¹¹⁰ The aesthetic experience of beauty refers to finding charm in the form of an object whereas the aesthetic experience of the sublime is the ability to overcome a natural feeling of fear by appreciating the splendor of an experience. Kant argued that the observer could respond to either a natural or an artistic object as beautiful but could only have a sublime experience in response to nature or occasionally architecture. The sublime can be illustrated by comparing the experience of admiring a butterfly to appreciating a thunderstorm. The experience of the thunderstorm is likely to be a far more overwhelming and dramatic experience. We may be impressed by the electric display and the rolls of thunder of the storm, but we can also feel awe at the power of the storm and feel endangered by the storm. Architecture is capable of being sublime because of its size and the fact that we are able to interact with it to some degree. We may feel overawed at seeing the York Minster. It is a huge,

¹⁰⁸ Lyotard, J.F. (1994) *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California.

¹⁰⁹ Adorno, T.W. (1997) *Aesthetic Theory*.

¹¹⁰ Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgment*.

magnificent building that can be appreciated as a beautiful building or as a historical or social piece. We can enter the Minster and may find it a religious experience, if we are so inclined. Architecture such as this can, like nature, make us aware of our insignificance and therefore can then possibly provide a sublime experience. One cannot however, be afraid of a painting. What it portrays may be alarming, but one is not in physical danger from the painting. One would be in fear of one's life when observing a volcano, but that is not possible when admiring a painting of the volcano. The aesthetic appreciation of nature can be enhanced by a feeling of humility as the thrill one feels when seeing the volcano or thunderstorm is not unconnected to their power. They are sublime because one is able to distance one's self from the dangers of the experience, in order to see the splendor in the event itself, and to appreciate the dignity of ourselves as rational beings who do not succumb to fear.¹¹¹

A potential problem for Berleant and Adorno is that not all nature is sublime. There are other 'gentler' responses such as the appreciation of a flower. There may well be no feeling of awe when considering a butterfly and yet we could still involve a feeling of connectedness in the appreciation, we can take pleasure in the knowledge of creation or origin of the butterfly that can involve a wonderment of our own existence. Our appreciation of a rose may well be much gentler than our response to a thunderstorm. Berleant answers this problem by introducing the idea of aesthetics of engagement. This means that even when the appreciation of nature is not sublime, there is still an engagement with the object being considered because we are part of nature. This engagement allows for the fact that we can appreciate nature without needing to step away from it as we often do with art. Berleant claims that it is through an

¹¹¹ Lyotard, J.F. (1994) *Lessons on the Analytic of the Sublime*.

understanding of engagement in the natural aesthetic experience that we can truly conceive the aesthetic character of nature,

“Nature ... is transferred into a realm in which we live as participants, not observers. The consequences are not de-aestheticizing, as the 18th century would have it, but intensely and inescapably aesthetic”.¹¹²

This ‘aesthetics of engagement’ might seem to exclude art but really there is no reason why we cannot consider art to engage us as well (indeed, Berleant himself urges an engagement conception of art experience as well). Art is after all inspired and influenced by our surroundings, current events and experience. Monet’s paintings of the water lilies might seem like pretty squiggles of colour if we had no understanding of his method or if we had no understanding of what a water lily was. If the artist and observer never shared the inspiration, then any meaning the art held could never be understood or interpreted. We are therefore as engaged in art as we are in nature.

Another problem with claiming that nature can induce a greater feeling of fear and therefore awe because of our involvement with it, is that there is some art or architecture that can also induce fear and awe. This point also further illustrates our engagement with art. If one was to have a photograph of the Manhattan skyline it might include the Twin Towers. Whilst one would doubtlessly admire the skyline and the fantastic architecture, it is also unavoidable that the events of September 11th 2001 would cross one’s mind. This association changes the aesthetic appreciation of the photo considerably and whilst one once might have focused purely on the architecture, one could now understandably feel sadness and possibly fear. The current political climate

¹¹² Berleant, A. (1993) “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature”, pp. 236.

means that many of us are well aware of the risk from terrorism. We are therefore directly involved with many of the issues one might bring to mind when seeing a photo of the Twin Towers and are as involved in and as effected by the photo as by a thunderstorm. Art often is inspired by and so reflects current events or situations that involve us. A photo of a lion may not be likely to jump of the wall and attack us but that does not mean that an individual who has been involved with lions cannot feel involved in the photo. This involvement means that art, as in the photo of the Twin Towers, can provoke fear and therefore it is possible to have similar reactions to both art and nature in terms of fear, awe and therefore the sublime. To claim that art does not engage us to the extent nature does is erroneous as art is often inspired by common feelings. Part of our fascination with art and the emotions and theories it expresses, is that we are able to understand and identify with them. Our ability to respond emotionally to a sad piece of music can be totally engaged because we have an understanding of what it is to be sad. Nature may be able to strike us with lightning or drown us in the ocean but art can be expressive of our emotions and ideas. We are therefore just as involved and engaged with art as we are in nature.

3.15 Intent.

The other major difference between art and nature that must be resolved is that nature has no creator whereas an artist creates art. Art is created with intent; it is planned and has meaning whilst nature simply exists. Hegel described this difference by claiming that

“the beauty of art is the beauty that is born – born again, that is – of the mind”¹¹³

or in other words, that art is imbued with and shaped by the mental whereas nature is shaped by the physical. For example, when Matisse created his work ‘The Snail’, he would have begun with an idea and planned how to create it. He would have considered what materials were best, what colours he wanted to use and how big he wanted it to be. This process is very different from the lack of intent involved when woodland is created. There is no mental process present to consider what seeds will fall where, no mental process involved in the progression of climax, no one to decide to prune one tree and leave another. A natural object such as a tree has not had its existence planned and it holds no hidden meaning for us to deduce. An artist can consider what they wish to create and act accordingly. They are able to choose subjects and materials and alter the art to their liking as it progresses. Fontana’s slashed canvas involved a concept and was created to show a specific idea. A plant grows according to conditions such as light. The direction a vine grows in does not involve aesthetic design but simply the stimuli the vine receives. Indeed it is this lack of planning or intent that provides part of the charm of natural aesthetic experience. When one is presented with a beautiful natural view, part of the delight comes from the natural state of the view, that is has come about through chance. The beauty is unintentional and the way in which this can occur is aesthetic in itself. Art has been created with intent whereas nature has no plan or purpose behind its existence.

Another alleged consequence of art having a creator is that art often has meaning whereas nature, being free from intent, does not¹¹⁴. The aesthetic appreciation of both art

¹¹³ Hegel, G.W.F. (1993) *Introductory Lectures on Aesthetics* (Translated by B. Bosanquet) Penguin Books Ltd., London, p.4.

and nature begins with perception.¹¹⁵ With art this perception and the resulting associations and the artist controls interpretations, at least initially. Artists often have a concept in mind when creating art, for example Fontana created “Waiting” with the idea of extending the scope of the canvas. In the aesthetic appreciation of nature, there is no guidance for the imagination so the observer must do all the work. The aesthetic object or view is open to be interpreted or responded to however the observer wishes. An illustration of this is the experience of coming across an unusual grouping of rocks whilst walking. One might consider how the rocks can lie as they do and wonder at the natural processes and time that has passed. If one was then to find out that the rocks were arranged thus by someone such as an environmental artist, one might still respond aesthetically, but the intellectual associations that one would make in regards to the aesthetic object would be very different as one might wonder why the rocks were arranged as they are or marvel that the artist managed to make the scene look so natural. A further point is that art is also often a representation of something.¹¹⁶ Dali’s “Persistence of Memory” represented a dream he had and even a simple portrait, which we might not think of as having any great concept behind it, is still a representation of an individual. We cannot consider the meaning behind nature, as there is no intent or creator. Nature is never a representation of anything else and just as the twists in a vine cannot be congratulated on their aesthetic skills, we cannot consider the meaning behind them either. As nature is incapable of intent, so it is impossible for us to try to seek out and interpret a concept placed there by the artist.

¹¹⁴ Crawford, D.W. (1993) “Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty”.

¹¹⁵ Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgment* and more recently Hepburn, R.W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”.

¹¹⁶ Carroll, N. (1999) *Philosophy of Art*.

There is one theory that argues that the lack of an artist in nature actually means that there cannot be an aesthetic response to nature. The Human Chauvinistic view, favoured by Robert Elliot, claims that the differences between art and nature are so significant that one's response to nature can never in fact be aesthetic.¹¹⁷ As there is no artist to be admired, discussed or referred to in the appreciation of nature, Elliot claims that the appreciation of nature is too far from the appreciation of art to be called aesthetic. This approach views the relationship between an artist and their art as key in the observer's appreciation of the art. In other words, we do not merely appreciate an aesthetic object as an item worthy of appreciation, but as an object created with the intention of being observed. This means that one cannot claim that nature is an aesthetic object as there is no aesthetic intent present in its creation.

One problem for the Human Chauvinistic Aesthetic is that it assumes that only human created objects can be appreciated aesthetically because only human created aesthetic objects are created with intent. This enforces the nature/culture duality that is so problematic by indicating that the mental is more important than the physical and implies that human created objects are somehow superior to natural objects. The response that Robert Elliot would probably offer to this complaint is that the presence of intent is significant in the aesthetic experience and affects how we view an object. This is completely true as the role of intent in art is extremely significant in how we interpret a piece of art. When admiring Tracy Emin's work such as 'My Bed', the chances are that one is more interested in what the artist is trying to express than the beauty of the object itself. However this does not prove that intent is essential to the aesthetic

¹¹⁷ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

experience. It may affect one's response but it is not the sole cause of our response. Furthermore, if one defines the aesthetic experience purely on the presence of intentionality, the aesthetic ceases to be about appreciation, form, skill or a disinterested observation of an object, it simply becomes about the relationship between art and artist. This is extremely limiting and excludes any item that has not been created with the specific intent of being aesthetic. One can therefore dismiss the Human Chauvinistic Aesthetic as an incorrect response to the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

A potential problem with arguing that one difference between appreciating art and appreciating nature is the presence of a creator is that humans affect nature.¹¹⁸ Gardens for example could be considered art as they involve human design. In a garden we decide which plant grows where and how large it can grow. As mentioned earlier, there is no or little nature left that has not been affected by humans. Even those areas that we consider to be totally natural such as a national park often have pathways, walls and farmland within them. Woodlands are often 'managed' by weeding out competitive species that could out compete other 'native' species and change the composition of the wood. We have genetic programs to prevent endangered animals from becoming extinct and societies to protect unstable ecosystems. One could therefore claim that nature does have an artist, humans. This would mean that there is an element of intent in nature and a deliberate creator presence in the environments' creation.¹¹⁹

It could be argued of course, that humans are part of nature and that therefore our participation in nature is not that of a creator or artist but simply just another natural factor or that the presence of human intent in nature means that it is actually a form of

¹¹⁸ Hazelrigg, L. (1995) *Cultures of Nature – An Essay on the Production of Nature*, University Press of Florida, Gainesville.

¹¹⁹ Carlson, A. (1993) "Appreciating art and Appreciating Nature".

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¹¹⁹ Carlson, A. (1993) "Appreciating art and Appreciating Nature".

art.¹²⁰ However a more honest way of looking at the situation is to claim that whilst humans do alter nature, it is no one individual that is doing this and furthermore, the changes that are made are to help humans to thrive rather for purely aesthetic reasons. The pattern of fields across Britain were not planned out to make the countryside look pretty, but to divide the land for different farmers and uses. This means that it is better to consider humans' general effects on nature (other than gardens) as natural, animal effects on nature. Furthermore, comparing the aesthetic appreciation of gardens to the aesthetic appreciation of nature is a weak comparison for discussing art and nature as gardens are so full of nature. Gardens are not pure art in that the artist does not solely control them. Gardens are natural places with natural objects and cannot therefore be claimed to be only art. We should not therefore draw many comparisons between art and nature when using gardens as an example of art.

A problem with arguing that humans are the artists of nature is that even when an entire landscape has been planned and planted by humans, that landscape is still able to change itself. The way a landscape grows is dependent on the weather, which humans cannot control. We cannot stop plants growing even if we can cut it back or try to alter how it grows. We cannot control what wildlife comes into the garden, nor what seeds they bring with them. The gardener's eternal struggle with weeds illustrates how one cannot have complete control of what grows in the garden. Claiming that humans are the artists of nature is incorrect, as we do not have enough control over nature to assume this role. We can alter it and influence its direction but it is still a living entity, which means that it is constantly changing and is beyond our complete control. In art, the artist

¹²⁰ Ross, S. (1993) "Gardens, Earthwork, and Environmental art".



control every aspect of how the art is created. They choose its shape, its position and its composition. As humans cannot be certain of having complete control over all these factors in nature or a garden, then humans cannot truly be said to be the artists of nature.

3.2 Uniting art and nature.

In order to be able to apply artistic aesthetic theory to natural aesthetics, we must accommodate for the main difference between the aesthetics of art and nature, which follows Hegel in taking it that the central difference is the presence of mentality or intent in the case of art.¹²¹ Crawford argues that there are two ways in which we can do this; the expressive nature view and the Hegelian view. The expressive nature view is the idea that

“natural beauty similarly possesses expressive and semantic properties”,¹²² meaning that nature can be as expressive and open to interpretation and associations as art, hence solving the problem of intentionality. This can be done in three ways. The first is to assume that God created the world. This would place God as creator in the place of the artist and would therefore be an answer to the problem. This attempt to reconcile art and nature has the obvious problem of requiring faith in God as, clearly, if one is not religious, this view cannot be accepted. The second way in which we can attempt to link art and nature is to claim that we ascribe meaning to nature, for example we call a storm ‘angry’. As this thesis aims to consider whether the emotional reactions we have to nature (which may well be due in some part to the associations we make) are appropriate, it seems unwise to base a connection between art and nature on what

¹²¹ This “main difference” is based on the idea that the framing problem is of course a direct result of the lack of an artist in nature and can therefore be treated as one major issue with several repercussions.

¹²² Crawford, D.W. (1993) “Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty”, p.189.

Hepburn might call “trivial” or sentimental imaginings, thereby ruling this method out.¹²³

The third method of solving the problem of intentionality is the most promising and is based on the fact that

“beautiful natural objects do not exist in isolation from processes of nature”,¹²⁴ in other words that whether the item we admire is natural or art, we can take pleasure and interest in the process of creation of the object. Part of our admiration for art is linked to how it is created. We can admire the artist’s skill and debate the theory behind what we see. As there is no artist in nature, we cannot search for the meaning behind it but we can admire the natural processes that have created it. Art may be created and have meaning and concepts behind it, but nature has natural processes such as ecosystems, climax, genetics and evolution. We may be impressed with the theory behind Fontana’s work but we can also be awed by the centuries of evolution that resulted in the lily. The intentionality of art can be compared to the unintentional yet precise mechanisms of nature, thus linking the two aesthetic areas as the method by which each came about can both be analyzed and admired. Despite the fact that this is the strongest concept, there are still some problems with it. Firstly it is possible that having to consider the origins of nature could detract from the beauty of nature and the pure aesthetic experience. It is feasible that involving evolution in the aesthetic appreciation of nature could lead to self-interested considerations such as one’s own origin that could detract from the aesthetic experience. A counterargument to this is that

¹²³ Hepburn, R. W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”.

¹²⁴ Crawford, D. W. (1993) “Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty”, p.190.

art has theory behind it and this enhances the aesthetics of art rather than lessens it.¹²⁵

Furthermore, understanding the unusual evolutionary history of the woodlouse is likely to make one appreciate it more and be better prepared to see the beauty of it. A second problem is that despite the impressive nature of these processes such as evolution, they are still unintentional and so cannot be declared the same as the intention present in art.

Although this is true, it is not the intention that art and nature be declared identical.

Instead the aim is to show that they are similar enough that aesthetic theory can be applied, with consideration, to nature. The scientific processes behind nature are reflective of the concepts behind art as they show the process of how the aesthetic object came about. The fact that art is intentional and nature is not should not be considered a problem but instead as an interesting difference between two important areas of aesthetics.

3.21 Similarities between art and nature.

3.211 Beauty.

The first and most obvious similarity between art and nature is that we can find beauty in form in both art and nature. The form of both a Picasso and a caterpillar can be admired. We can take pleasure and interest in the physical shapes that we see. Berleant claims,

¹²⁵ This is the original basis for Carlson's views on involving science in the aesthetics of nature in order to reflect the 'categories of art' suggested by Kendal Watson. Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment".

“Both can be experienced perceptually; both can be appreciated aesthetically; and more particularly still, both can function reciprocally with the appreciator”.¹²⁶

It may sound obvious to claim that both art and nature can be appreciated as objects in themselves, but this is important to state as it is important to remember that both art and nature are aesthetically enjoyable and so therefore must have some aspects of the aesthetic experience in common. Kant claimed that for one to have an aesthetic experience one must firstly be absorbed by the object one is considering.¹²⁷ One is engaged in contemplation regarding the form of the object. This means that one must be reacting to what one sees such as a painting or a landscape, not simply aware it is present but truly paying attention to it. Secondly one must start the aesthetic experience by responding to a sensory stimulus. For an object to be aesthetic it must affect our senses in some way whether it is our sight or our hearing. One cannot have an aesthetic experience if there is nothing to appreciate otherwise one could have an aesthetic experience of a painting one had never seen. Thirdly, Kant claims that the response must be disinterested meaning, as previously discussed, that one should not have irrelevant thoughts that are not related to the aesthetic character of the object. These three guidelines both can apply to the appreciation of art and nature. One can stand absorbed before both a Monet and a landscape, both assault one's senses and both appreciations can be disinterested. There may be appreciations of nature that are not purely aesthetic just as there can be with art, but that cannot detract from the fact that it is entirely possible to respond aesthetically to both art and nature. The fact the definition of an

¹²⁶ Berleant, A. (1993) “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature”, p.239.

¹²⁷ Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgment*.

aesthetic experience can apply to both art and nature means that they must be related.

Art is not the only object of the aesthetic experience; it is simply the most common example. So long as it is possible to be fully absorbed in the admiration of the physical and perceptual properties of nature, it will be possible to respond aesthetically to nature.

3.212 Art, Nature and Knowledge.

One possible difference between the aesthetic appreciation of art and nature is that it could be claimed that art is influenced by culture whilst the appreciation of nature is not. When we admire art, we judge it not only for its beauty but also its meaning and its relevance to our culture. For example, when watching a film such as the recent *The Passion of the Christ*, our opinions and responses are affected by our knowledge of the story it portrays, the controversy surrounding the film and the various arguments others have made about the film. It could be argued that the aesthetic appreciation of nature is not influenced by knowledge in this way as it is not created with a concept involved and there is no artistic theory to follow. However this misses the point that our responses to nature have a history and that it is altered by our changing relationship with nature. The aesthetic appreciation of both art and nature relies on general knowledge and cultural views in order to make judgments about what we see. Both our aesthetic appreciations of art and nature involve knowledge of what we are appreciating. In appreciating Dali's 'Persistence of memory', we have a concept of what a clock is, what time is and how we are constrained by time. We have an understanding of what a dream is and of what we imagine a dream-like state to be. This knowledge or these assumptions help us to have an idea of what Dali is portraying in his work and to appreciate it appropriately. Similarly, in appreciating Niagara Falls, we must understand that such a waterfall is rare

and that what we are seeing is considered impressive. We must know that there is a vast amount of water involved and a great height. The knowledge we hold about the objects we see helps us interpret and respond to them. When we are considering an aesthetic object, whether it is natural or human made, our response relies heavily on social influence. Our responses to aesthetics are heavily influenced by society's views on the world. When we use knowledge to interpret a painting, we are not only drawing on true full, scientific facts; we are also drawing on our knowledge of possible interpretations or associations. The first proof we have of this is to consider how aesthetic judgments have altered over the years according to society. An example of this is to look at portrayals of human beauty over the ages. There have been thousands of paintings of women painted over the centuries, most of which were painted with the idea of beauty in mind. However, what counts as typically beautiful has differed widely. Renoir's portraits of women when compared to Mario Testino's photos of Kate Moss (a model currently considered to be beautiful) are very different, each showing beauty as society at the time saw it. There is the famous example of Marilyn Monroe, considered an incredibly beautiful woman in the 1950's; had she gone to Hollywood today, most likely she would sadly be told to lose weight. If what is typically considered beautiful by a society can alter, then this must show that one person's judgment can affect another's and that therefore, our aesthetic judgments are to some extent, social constructs.

The second piece of evidence for the argument that both the aesthetic appreciation of art and nature are effected by our society is that we use knowledge in making aesthetic judgments. We are aware that Niagara Falls is considered impressive just as we are aware that Dali's work is considered dreamlike. It is socially acceptable to

consider baby animals such as tiger cubs 'cute' just as it is socially acceptable to consider colourful paintings attractive. There are factors in both art and nature that we are socially inclined to respond to in certain ways. This similarity means,

“A single aesthetic applies to nature and to art because, in the final analysis, they are both cultural constructs, and so we are not talking about two things but one”.¹²⁸

Just as knowledge and reason are involve in emotional responses, so they are involved in responses to art and nature. Our judgment of a photo of the Manhattan skyline including the Twin Towers is influenced by our knowledge of September 11th and our knowledge of our society's opinion of that event.

A third example of how we involve knowledge in our perceptions of art and nature is that both are influenced by our own situation as our knowledge of and relation to nature influences our perception of nature. Berleant gives the example of a lion as observed firstly by someone who lives in an area with wild lions who might consider them a genuine threat, and secondly by a visitor who may be concerned with the welfare of lions. The first person may not be disinterested and the second may be sentimental but both of these responses are guided by their knowledge and social beliefs. Berleant describes this in nature when he says,

“Not only is nature affected pervasively by human action; our very conception of nature has emerged historically, differing widely from one cultural tradition to another. What we mean by nature, our beliefs about wilderness, the recognition of landscape, our very sense of environment have all made a historical

¹²⁸ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature", p:242.

appearance and have been understood differently at different times and places".¹²⁹

It is inevitable that our situation changes our aesthetic responses.

There are many problems that surround any in depth discussion of knowledge in aesthetic experience. One subject that has caused much debate is the extent to which one can involve knowledge in the aesthetic experience before it ceases to be disinterested or it becomes a scientific or theoretical experience rather than an aesthetic one. Including some knowledge in the aesthetic experience is unavoidable and has the advantage that it helps us to avoid the quagmire of sentimentality, which can lead to the trivialization of aesthetic experience. However considering the aim of this thesis is to eventually lead us into the subject of sentimentality and knowledge, it would be premature to discuss the problems surrounding knowledge before we have properly discussed the nature of the aesthetic appreciation of nature. We can be sure that there is some level of knowledge involved in the aesthetic appreciation of both art and nature without needing to discuss its' extent or implications just yet. It is for this reason then that the problems raised in involving knowledge in the aesthetic experience will be involved at a later date.

The aesthetic appreciation of art and the aesthetic appreciation of nature can be linked because the responses they result in are both based on a response to a sense of beauty or splendor and can also involve knowledge whether it is based on cultural assumptions, art theory or science. This similarity exists despite the fact that the two aesthetic experiences can be greatly different from each other. The aesthetic appreciation of nature may be freer but it is still, like the aesthetic appreciation of art, an aesthetic response. Furthermore both result in different fashions from the physical world

¹²⁹ Ibid, p.234.

and are appreciated in the mental world. Humans are reliant on the physical world. It is through the physical world that humans experience and learn, which shapes their personalities and lives, both moral and physical. Without the physical world it is unlikely that we would be able to make the mental links necessary to understand or create art. Artists rely on the physical world for inspiration and for materials with which to create art. Without the physical world we could not create art or understand it and therefore the mental world is dependent on the physical for the information it needs. There is, therefore, an innate connection and dependence between the human mental world and the natural physical one, which further connects art and nature.¹³⁰ One may therefore apply much of the theory behind aesthetic responses to art to the aesthetic appreciation of nature as they are, however different in certain respects, both types of genuinely aesthetic appreciation.

3.3 Approaches to the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature.

Having established the main differences between the aesthetic appreciation of art and the aesthetic appreciation of nature, it is next necessary to discuss some of the theories that have been presented explaining how the aesthetic response to nature can occur. One of the main problems of defining the aesthetic appreciation of nature is that one cannot be certain what it is that the observer should be appreciating and how they should be appreciating it. Unlike the more controlled aesthetic appreciation of art, nature is more unpredictable; anything could be taken into consideration. As Carlson says,

¹³⁰ McFague, S. (1996) "The Scope of the Body: The Cosmic Christ", in *This Sacred Earth*, Ed. Roger S. Gottlieb, Routledge, London, pp. 286-296.

“With art objects ... we know that we are to appreciate the sound of the piano in the concert hall and not the coughing which interrupts it”.¹³¹

There have been several theories presented to explain the aesthetic response in recent years, several of which are discussed by Budd, in his book *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.¹³² I will be describing here five of these, namely the object model, the natural environment model, the landscape model, the aloofness model and Budd’s model as well as discussing the theories presented by Kant, Adorno and Berleant. This summary of the various approaches should increase not only our understanding of the aesthetics of nature but also raise some of the problems which will have to be dealt with later on in this thesis. As the focus of this thesis is to examine the role of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature, my theory regarding the aesthetic response to nature is one that will become more apparent in the following chapters in the discussion regarding emotion. However I will argue here in part for Berleant’s view as well as Adorno’s in that I intend to place significance on the engagement of the observer with the natural aesthetic object as well as the role of social and historic influence on our responses to that aesthetic object.

3.31 Kant.

Kant is not only the philosopher commonly referred to as ‘the father of aesthetics’, he is also the philosopher who first focused mainly on the aesthetics of nature. His *Critique of Judgment* has been extremely influential and has been used as a basis by philosophers discussing aesthetic theories and as a standard to which these

¹³¹ Carlson, A. (1979) “Appreciation and the Natural Environment” p.267.

¹³² Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

theories are held up to.¹³³ Kant lays out the basis of his judgment of taste in his first section of the ‘Analytic of the aesthetic power of judgment’ which consists of four moments. The first moment focuses on the first of Kant’s recommendations for defining a judgment of taste which is disinterestedness. Kant argues that a judgment of taste is not a logical judgment that is based on objective qualities. He argues that as there is no objective aesthetic property that can be found within an object, the aesthetic response must be subjective. He claims that the representation of the aesthetic object may be objective but the lack of a concept of the beautiful means that the response can only ever be subjective;

“the judgment of taste is therefore not a cognitive judgment, hence not a logical one, but is rather aesthetic, by which is understood one whose determining ground cannot be other than subjective”.¹³⁴

To qualify this, Kant then introduces the concept of disinterestedness, an idea that has become extremely influential in aesthetics, particularly the aesthetics of nature.

Disinterestedness is the idea that in order to have a true judgment of taste, we should be disinterested or detached from the aesthetic object, or that, in other words, we need to be focused on the aesthetic rather than other concerns. Kant gives a rare and illustrative example to help clarify this concept of an individual who has been asked their opinion on the aesthetics of a palace. If an individual is asked to comment on the beauty of a palace but is so distracted by their political disagreement with the building that they are uninterested in the beauty of it then this cannot not be said to be an aesthetic response. One needs instead to be focused on the form of the object in question as opposed to

¹³³ Kant, I. (1987) *Critique of Judgment*.

¹³⁴ *Ibid*, p.89.

other factors. Kant then goes on to talk about the Good, the Beautiful and the Agreeable which he believes will give us some insight into the judgment of taste. He does this by saying that

“agreeable is that which everyone calls what gratifies him; beautiful, what merely pleases him; good, what is esteemed, approved”.¹³⁵

The key point here that Kant wants to make and which he goes on to discuss in more detail in the second moment is that for something to be good, we must have a concept of what good is whereas with the agreeable and the beautiful, there are no objective properties, it is a personal preference. The fact that the agreeable is based on inclination means that it must be subjective as there is no theory of inclination or of what we find gratifying. We cannot know without experiencing an object that we will find it to be agreeable. In contrast, since we may have a concept of what it is to say an object is good, we can say without experiencing the object that it is good, meaning that we can say that the good is objective. When however we move on to the beautiful, Kant wants to say something slightly different. Kant has already said that we have no concept of the beautiful which means that we must say that the judgment of taste as far as beauty must be subjective. However Kant points out that the way that we speak about beauty implies that we believe that we are making an objective or, as Kant calls it, a universal judgment. Upon making a judgment of taste about a rose, we do not, Kant says, talk of the rose being beautiful to us; we say that the rose is beautiful. We imply that the belief that the rose is beautiful is more than personal; we act as if we are responding to an objective fact and expect others to react in the same way. Kant therefore says that the judgment of taste has a subjective universality in that on one hand it involves no

¹³⁵ Ibid, p.95.

objective property of beautiful even though we may make the judgment as if the judgment was objective. Kant claims that there is a degree of ‘free play’ in the judgment of taste which allows from us to respond to a universal representation of an aesthetic object. This ‘free play’ comes from cognition and is linked to imagination in that Kant claims that this ‘free play’ is between understanding and imagination. Kant believes that it is this free reasoning that allows us, within the bounds of disinterestedness, to have judgments of taste that are universal. As Kant sees cognition as universal to humans, so it is cognition that introduces the universal element into the judgment of taste,

“this state of a free play of the faculties of cognition with a representation through which an object is given must be able to be universally communicated, because cognition... is the only kind of representation that is valid for everyone”.¹³⁶

Kant argues that it is from the

“harmony of the faculties of cognition”¹³⁷

that the pleasure of the aesthetic response arises. In other words, we seek out the aesthetic response as pleasurable because of the satisfaction that it gives both our senses and our minds.

Kant adds to his theory of aesthetics put forward in his *Critique of Judgment* the further idea of the Sublime. The sublime is a response that Kant believes can only truly occur in response to nature. The sublime is a dramatic response, one of awe and immediacy. Kant believed that sublime responses did not occur often in the aesthetic and were occasions where one was confronted with dramatic natural scenes that are

¹³⁶ Ibid, p.102-103.

¹³⁷ Ibid, p.103.

almost overwhelming. Kant believed that there is an element of fear in the sublime, that the sublime should be associated with the feeling that one is small in comparison to the world. An example of the sublime would be the response one might have to Niagara Falls. In such a situation one might feel amazed by the sheer size of the waterfall and might feel insignificant besides it whilst also struck by its beauty. The sublime is significant in looking at emotional responses in the aesthetic response to nature because it is one of the possible responses to nature that can arouse very strong emotions and which is most likely to occur when confronted with dramatic natural scenes such as a mountain, a waterfall or a desert. It is also useful as a demonstration of how it is that we are able to respond aesthetically to the more extreme areas of nature which can threaten as well as delight us.

Kant's theory is particularly significant in terms of the influence it has had on the theories presented by other philosophers. The concept of disinterestedness is one that has been picked up on by philosophers such as Emily Brady as well as those philosophers such as Godlovitch who feel that for the aesthetic response to be serious, it must be based upon a serious understanding of nature.¹³⁸ The idea that the aesthetic response is perception lead is also one that is, understandably, extremely popular. The concept of the sublime has become a central concept in the aesthetics of nature and will be discussed again later in the thesis. Although it is fair to say that modern theories regarding the aesthetics of nature may have gone beyond the ideas offered by Kant in terms of involving emotion, imagination or knowledge or by placing more emphasis on the absence of an artist, Kant's ideas remain both highly influential.

¹³⁸ Godlovitch, S. (2004) Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics, in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, Eds. A. Berleant & A. Carlson, Broadview Press, Toronto, pp.108-126.

3.32 The Object Model.

The Object of Art Model attempts to fit the aesthetic appreciation of nature to the mould of the aesthetic appreciation of art by claiming that in order to appreciate nature correctly, one should attempt to mentally remove our object of contemplation from its surroundings.¹³⁹ When admiring a rose for example, one should attempt to concentrate only on the rose and consider it divorced from the bush or garden the surrounds it. By doing this one may be able to experience the individual natural object in much the same way the one experiences a painting as separate from the gallery that contains it.

A major problem with this approach is that it stops being a true appreciation of nature. Rather than appreciating nature for itself it concentrates on trying to superimpose an artistic context onto nature. In much the same manner as Elliot's approach, it presupposes that art is the primary object of aesthetic appreciation and invites a more valid aesthetic experience than the aesthetic appreciation of nature.¹⁴⁰

Another problem with the object of art model is that by removing (mentally) natural objects from their environment, one changes the context of the object. Much of the meaning in or significance of nature comes from the fact that nature is interlinked. One natural object lives because of and with another. To admire a turtle and ignore its location in a beautiful pond would mean ignoring half of its beauty. To admire only the turtle would mean ignoring the graceful manner in which it swims or how it builds its home. Often natural processes have a beauty to them too which would also be ignored if one were always to separate a natural object from its surroundings. Watching a butterfly

¹³⁹ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

¹⁴⁰ Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment".

may lead to an admiration of its pollinating skills or admiring a chimpanzee may lead to a consideration of evolution. These contexts add meaning and depth to our aesthetic appreciation of nature and yet the Object of Art Model would mean rejecting any consideration of these factors.

The counter argument that an advocate of the Object of Art model would offer is that in art one considers the object one is considering as separate from its surroundings and yet one can still take one's knowledge of art history or theory into consideration when admiring the object.¹⁴¹ Therefore there would be no reason why the context of the natural object in terms of science or evolution cannot be considered to be on a similar level to knowledge of art history and therefore taken into consideration in the same manner. The problem with this, however, is that it is not merely the knowledge that we possess about nature that adds to our aesthetic experience; it is watching the interaction of nature. To admire a gerbil as a beautiful member of the rodent family is certainly an aesthetic experience but to watch a small group of gerbils, to watch them build tunnels, make nests and generally interact with their environment and with each other is a far more diverse and rewarding past-time. It could be claimed that in this case the experience of watching a group of gerbils would not be a true aesthetic experience as it would not be a detached consideration of the object. However to admire nature, particularly an animal, as separate from its surroundings is in fact to trivialize its relationship to its environment. If we were to separate the natural object from its surroundings, it would in fact mean that we were not adequately immersed in the aesthetic experience as we would be ignoring key components of the natural aesthetic experience.

¹⁴¹ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

3.33 The Landscape Model.

The Landscape Model is a descendant of Kant's definition of the picturesque in that

“[This] model encourages perceiving and appreciating nature as if it were a landscape painting, as a grandiose prospect seen from a specific standpoint and distance. It is a model which centers attention on those aesthetic qualities of colour and design which are seen and seen at a distance.”¹⁴²

By considering nature in the same way that one considers a landscape painting it appears easier to define what we are appreciating and how we are appreciating nature as. In a similar mode to the Object of Art Model, one can apply artistic principles such as judgments of light and form to the landscape before us.

An issue with the Landscape Model (quite apart from the criticisms that have already been made of the 'object of art' model) is that it assumes that we will be observing landscapes rather than individual flora or fauna.¹⁴³ Nature is interactive meaning that it is likely to interact not only with the surrounding environment but also with the observer. Nature is active rather than passive and therefore judgments of nature based on matters of colour or design often neglect the point that much of our aesthetic enjoyment of nature results from its interactive character. Landscape paintings are flat, passive paintings, the aesthetic appreciation of which is completely at odds with the experience of appreciating an interactive, living environment meaning therefore that we

¹⁴² Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment".

¹⁴³ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

interact with landscapes in a way we do not with landscape paintings and therefore to assume that the same aesthetic criteria should apply to both is faulty.

A further problem that comes from the interactive character of nature is that it very difficult to find, or rather makes no clear sense to speak of, the correct viewpoint to view nature from.¹⁴⁴ In art we are provided with the correct viewpoints from which to observe from, but because nature surrounds us, the viewpoint we seek could be anywhere. In art the artist controls the viewpoint whereas in nature one has the freedom to find one's own viewpoint, it is more subjective than the aesthetic appreciation of art. There is no correct viewpoint in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and no boundaries to what we include in our consideration, meaning that the comparison of art to nature cannot be relied upon for providing guidance in providing rules in how one observes nature.

Another problem with the landscape model is that it assumes that we can apply the same principles to an aesthetic experience which assaults all the senses to one that only involves our sight and our intellect. The aesthetic appreciation of a hillside involves not only the view but also the feel of the wind in our hair, the smell of the air and the feel of the ground beneath our feet whereas the aesthetic appreciation of a landscape painting involves only looking at the painting and imagining the real location. To attempt to reduce the aesthetic appreciation of nature to the consideration of colour and form of a landscape is inappropriate as it would mean ignoring the full engagement involved in appreciating nature and would mean trying to reduce the experience thereby trivializing many aspects of nature. Much of the beauty of nature is not merely from the

¹⁴⁴ Crawford, D.W. (1993) "Comparing Natural and Artistic Beauty".

appearance of nature but from the smells and feel of nature. Attempting to ignore these factors may make it easier to define and discuss the aesthetic appreciation of nature but it does not provide an accurate or indeed desirable description of the appreciation of nature. I am therefore dismissing this model in much the same manner that both Carlson and Budd dismissed it as being an inaccurate description of how the aesthetic response to nature occurs.

3.24 Adorno.

Adorno placed much significance on natural beauty and his theory is one that not only provides an excellent representation of the role of society in natural aesthetics but also picks up on a major problem for the aesthetics of nature in terms of positive aesthetics.¹⁴⁵ Positive aesthetics refers to the idea that everything is, or has the potential to be considered as, beautiful. This is a particularly popular position in natural aesthetics. Adorno's theory, like Kant's, is descriptive rather than prescriptive and argues that the aesthetics of both nature and art are image based. This move is again reminiscent of Kant in that Adorno argues that the way in which we respond to both art and nature is based on the perceptual aspects of the aesthetic object rather than on the use or 'action' of the object. Adorno believes nature to be 'indefinable', that it has no intrinsic meaning due to the lack of an artist in its creation. He argues instead that it is only through art that nature can be truly interpreted or given definition. His position is that our aesthetic response to a natural object or scene is based on a historical core which

¹⁴⁵ Adorno, T.W. (1984) *Aesthetic Theory*. See pp.91-115 for his discussion of natural aesthetics.

“both legitimates and detracts from natural beauty”.¹⁴⁶

He starts his comments on natural beauty by discussing how the historic emphasis on reason has led to a neglect of natural beauty in favour of theory based, reason-centered art and goes on to emphasise his point regarding the influence of society by mentioning the tendency of those who depend heavily on nature for survival to be unable to distance themselves from their own needs in order to see nature aesthetically. This idea raised by Adorno, that society and society's historic relationship with nature is central to any individual's aesthetic response to nature, will be fundamental to this thesis in that this will be in many ways the argument I follow, in chapter four, in reference to our emotional aesthetic responses to nature. Adorno's approach here seems to be a realistic representation of how aesthetic responses to nature occur in that our responses to nature do indeed seem to be greatly influenced by the views perpetuated by our society. This point is illustrated by Adorno in terms of our definitions of nature. He refers to the fact that in western society we have particularly come to associate nature with national parks and wilderness areas rather than seeing nature as all around us. These parks have in many ways come to define nature for our culture meaning that when we think of nature we think of it in these terms. One is reminded here of Wittgenstein's view that the language used by a culture to describe an object forms the extent to which any individual in that culture can understand the object.¹⁴⁷

A problem that Adorno discusses in terms of the historical core of his theory is that he sees the role of society in the aesthetics of nature as both beneficial and troublesome. He argues, convincingly, that although society and history indisputably

¹⁴⁶ Ibid, p.96.

¹⁴⁷ Wittgenstein, L. (2004) *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Translated by D.F. Pears & B.F. McGuinness, Routledge, London.

guide the aesthetic response to nature, this involvement can often lead to the problem that the

“perception of nature is historically deformed”.¹⁴⁸

He claims that

“As nature becomes synonymous with national parks and wildlife preserves, its beauty is purely tokenistic. Natural Beauty is an ideological notion because it offers mediatedness in the guise of immediacy”.¹⁴⁹

What Adorno is getting at here is that as our society increasingly associated nature with the kind of nature that appears in nature reserves and wildlife parks, our understanding of nature is in many ways limited by just these definitions. Our response to nature often appears as if it is purely in response to the aesthetic object. There is no artist to guide us and so on first appearance we may presume that any response is based on the object rather than other factors. Adorno however points out that as our conception of nature becomes more influenced by the idea of nature as something to be protected and separated from us, so we tend to neglect another view of nature that sees nature as something we are part of. Society is determining what counts as nature in rather the way that, according to the ‘institutional’ theory of art, the ‘artworld’ determines what art is.

A major problem for the aesthetics of nature that Adorno develops is that there is no criterion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature to separate the ugly from the beautiful, meaning that everything has the potential to be beautiful. The lack of an artist in nature means that there is no basis on which one can objectively claim that one natural aesthetic object is more aesthetically valuable or beautiful than another. The

¹⁴⁸ Adorno, T.W. (1984) *Aesthetic Theory*, p.100.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, p.101.

problem that this presents is that if everything is beautiful then the word is effectively meaningless. Furthermore, if one claims that all of nature is objectively beautiful then this conflicts with the fact that we do not respond to nature as if it were all beautiful. There is much in nature that we treat as ugly and want to distinguish from the beautiful. There are some philosophers such as Carlson (whose ideas will be discussed shortly) who support positive aesthetics, the idea that everything in nature is objectively beautiful and that any negative aesthetic responses to nature are simply misguided or based on a misunderstanding of nature. Hamilton describes this issue as

“the antinomy of natural beauty”¹⁵⁰

and offers two alternative methods of resolving it.

“(1) “Possibly everything in nature can appear beautiful” = It is possible for everything (simultaneously) to appear beautiful.

(2) “Everything in nature can possibly appear beautiful” = For any given [natural] thing, it is possible for it to be (regarded as, appear) beautiful.”¹⁵¹

The second option for resolving the problem is the weaker and more reasonable option in that it would allow for different cultures to respond aesthetically to the same objects in different ways. This might be the approach that would most suit Adorno’s aesthetics. Hamilton argues that Adorno would actually reject both of these solutions and would be more likely to support the view that nature can be interpreted and criticized through art and thereby be considered as beautiful.

Adorno’s aesthetic theory is attractive in that the description of how our aesthetic responses to nature are influenced by society is a realistic representation of how many

¹⁵⁰ Hamilton, A. (2006) “Indeterminacy and Reciprocity: Contrasts and Connections between Natural and Artistic Beauty” forthcoming in the *Journal of Visual Art Practise*.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

attitudes towards nature are formed and is an area that is neglected by many aesthetic theories with respect to nature. The issues regarding positive aesthetics need to be further discussed however and for that reason it is now necessary to examine an extremely influential theory of natural aesthetics that is also a theory of positive aesthetics.

3.35 The Natural Environment Model.

The model proposed by Carlson is the Natural Environment Model and is based on the idea that one should use scientific knowledge to guide one's appreciation of nature in order to appreciate nature appropriately and fully.¹⁵² Carlson claims that scientific knowledge or the "natural history of environments"¹⁵³ can help us to understand what should be included in our consideration when observing nature, that

"knowledge of the environment may yield appropriate boundaries and limits; the sand of cicadas may be appreciated as a proper part of the environment, but the sound of distant traffic excluded much as we ignore coughing in the concert hall".¹⁵⁴

Carlson argues that by using scientific knowledge to guide us, we can solve the problem of knowing what one should be appreciating and how one should observe it. It allows us to understand why a river and a puddle should be appreciated differently as we look for different qualities in each. An important aspect of Carlson's theory is related to positive aesthetics in that it assumes that nature is generally something to be admired rather than

¹⁵² Carlson discusses his idea in several papers but also provides an excellent overview of the aesthetics of nature and related issues such as environmental art in Carlson, A. (2000) *Aesthetics and the Environment*, Routledge, London.

¹⁵³ Carlson, A. (2002) "Nature Appreciation and Aesthetic Relevance" in *Environment and the Arts*, (Ed) A. Berleant, Ashgate, Hampshire, p. 65.

¹⁵⁴ Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment", p.267.

something from which the occasional item may be appreciated as beautiful. He argues that through science and coming to a closer understanding of what the aesthetic object actually is, the true beauty inherent in nature will be revealed to the observer. Support is given to this approach by Fudge who in his 2001 paper *Imagination and the Science-Based Aesthetic Appreciation of Unscenic Nature* argues that scientific knowledge can help us to appreciate 'unscenic' nature¹⁵⁵. He claims that much of nature is dismissed as ugly and is therefore considered to be unimportant or less worth preserving. By having a greater understanding of the ecosystem of which a maggot is a part of, we can come to see of nature as aesthetically interesting. The argument here is that unscentic nature is made beautiful due to the 'system' of nature being beautiful. As we come to appreciate nature as a whole through science we come to appreciate the individual elements of nature as beautiful as well.

Another point that Carlson argues gives an advantage to the Natural Environment Model is that it results in an objective aesthetic, which appreciates nature rather than being anthropocentric. The fact that Carlson's approach is objective means that it would be possible for the aesthetic appreciation of nature to be valid rather than being inappropriate or sentimental. It adds discipline to what one can bring into consideration. Carlson argues that there are objectively right and wrong ways in which we can respond to nature and that by improving our scientific understanding of an object, we can improve our standard of aesthetic appreciation. An example of this would be if one were to observe a polar bear. Carlson would argue that without a scientific understanding of the polar bear, one might respond inappropriately. When the polar bear

¹⁵⁵ Fudge, R.S. (2001) "Imagination and the Science-Based Aesthetic Appreciation of Unscenic Nature", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.59, No.3, pp. 275-285.

appears to start playing by hiding its nose one might think of it as a harmless, gentle teddy-bear when in fact, if one was in possession of the fact that polar bears tend to cover their noses when stalking prey, one would be wise to respond with a great deal of fear and alarm. The knowledge we have about what we observe greatly influences how we respond to it and therefore it is likely that having correct information is more likely to result in an appropriate response than if one has incomplete or faulty information.

One problem for Carlson's Natural Environment Model that Emily Brady discusses in her paper 'Imagination in the aesthetic appreciation of nature' is that it is a reductionist theory that does not allow for the full range of aesthetic experiences to be included.¹⁵⁶ It is a theory that is based purely on the logical, objective responses one can have to nature and does not include the more personalized, intuitive responses one might have to nature. It dismisses any responses that are not based on solid scientific fact. Responses based on personal experience or emotions are rejected as inappropriate or incorrect. This means that when one appreciates a thunderstorm, one must be focused on one's knowledge of the electrical charge of the storm or one's knowledge of the weather patterns that result in the storm rather than enjoying the feeling of awe at the storm.

Another objection to Carlson is that the reductionist position of his theory results in a disengaged response to the aesthetic appreciation of nature. This is a problem that is raised by Berleant and that Berleant uses to propose his own aesthetics of engagement.¹⁵⁷ As discussed, Carlson's theory means that only scientific knowledge can be used to guide one's aesthetic response to nature and that therefore only emotional responses warranted by correct, scientific understanding can be considered appropriate.

¹⁵⁶ Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", pp. 139-147.

¹⁵⁷ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature", pp. 228-243.

This not only greatly reduces the aesthetic experience but also results in it being a much colder, detached response. Much of the charm of the aesthetic response is that it is a personal, involved response, particularly in the case of nature where one can feel a connection to the aesthetic object. It is these factors that enable people to have such diverse and interesting responses to nature and can often enrich the aesthetic experience. To rob the aesthetic response of this connection encourages not only an incorrect description of the aesthetic response but could also lead to a general detachment from nature. If one should refrain from personal connections in response to nature, then one can hardly respond to environmental damage or animal cruelty with the appropriate emotion. One might be able to make a moral or scientific judgment about the matter, but one could not feel angry at the abuse or sad at the neglect of nature. Carlson's approach, whilst allowing for a limited amount of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature, is ultimately too limiting both in terms of the influences it allows and in terms of the kind of response that comes from these influences. By removing personal connections with nature, Carlson is reducing the aesthetic response to nature to one with very limited emotion.

Both Carlson's theory and the resulting problems will be discussed in far more detail in the final chapter in terms of a theory that has attempted to attempt to prevent 'trivial' responses to nature by introducing a scientific framework. In terms, however, of rejecting it on the basis of a theory of the aesthetics of nature, at this stage in my argument however I wish in particular to discuss Carlson's theory in terms of it being an example of positive aesthetics and the problems that this incurs. Hamilton, as previous

mentioned, discusses positive aesthetics in relation to Adorno and in particular mention four major problems for positive aesthetic which will be briefly laid out here.¹⁵⁸

The first problem for positive aesthetics is that many advocates of positive aesthetics such as Carlson claim that any negative responses to nature are based on a lack of understanding of the aesthetic object and argue that these negative responses are due to cultural misguidance. The response that Hamilton offers to this point is that firstly some kind of cultural influence is inevitable and therefore cannot not be dismissed as totally irrelevant to the aesthetic response and secondly that many of these responses are in fact due to natural instinct and should therefore not be dismissed. A further point to add to this is the issue raised by philosophers such as Crist and Eaton that the scientific argument is in itself a western, socially influenced phenomenon.¹⁵⁹ The importance that our society places on science and the scientific definitions of objects is also a social condition and therefore to argue that our response to nature should be based on science is not as objective as those such as Carlson might want to argue. The influence of culture on the aesthetic response to nature cannot therefore be eradicated or dismissed as unimportant from the aesthetic response to nature as easily as Carlson might wish.

The second issue raised by Hamilton relates to the argument used by supporters of positive aesthetics that many of the aspects intrinsic to nature such as balance and order are inherently aesthetic, resulting in the inherent aesthetic quality of nature. This firstly is a rather sentimental assumption in that nature is not always balanced and

¹⁵⁸ Hamilton, A. (2006) "Indeterminacy and Reciprocity: Contrasts and Connections between Natural and Artistic Beauty".

¹⁵⁹ Crist, E. (2004) "Against the Social Construction of Nature and Wilderness", *Environmental Ethics*, Spring 2004 Vol.26 No.1, pp.5-24 and Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.56, No.2, pp. 149-155.

certainly not peacefully so. The idea that the balance of nature is aesthetic is rather upset by instances of natural extinction or the cruelty that some species show to others.

Secondly however is the problem that scientific knowledge is not necessarily going to make a scene aesthetic. If one observes a cat playing with the carcass of a mouse, the very messy scene is not necessarily sanctified by our awareness that such acts help control the mouse population or that the cat is practicing its instinctive hunting skills.

Such facts may enable us to see the cat in a more aesthetic light but the bloody mess of the mouse is likely to stay repulsive. Even if such knowledge was to sanctify the scene the question would remain regarding whether such sanctification would be appropriate.

The third issue raised by Hamilton against positive aesthetics is one which is inconclusive and has been mentioned briefly already: if everything is beautiful, then the description of anything natural as beautiful is redundant. The fourth issue is that positive aesthetics leaves no room for criticism of the aesthetic response. Although we may not want to argue that any of nature is inherently ugly, we may still wish to comment on that which we do not find aesthetically pleasing. That positive aesthetics does not allow this is a serious problem since it does not appear to reflect how we treat the aesthetic response. A weaker reading of positive aesthetics, that everything in nature has the potential to be responded to as beautiful rather than the argument that everything in nature is beautiful, is the position that holds the most potential and appears to be the most accurate description of the aesthetic response to nature.

3.36 The Aloofness Model.

The Aloofness Model was proposed by Stan Godlovitch and is based on an acentric natural aesthetic approach.¹⁶⁰ Acentric aesthetics comes from a form of environmentalism that claims that nature should be valued as a non-instrumental object with acentric value meaning that it is a view that is not nature centered or human centered, rather that that nature is intrinsically valuable without having to refer to moral or instrumental worth. Acentric aesthetics therefore, seeks to see nature

“on its own terms... indifferent to human scale and perspective”.¹⁶¹

The aim therefore of acentric aesthetics is to be completely detached from nature when considering it aesthetically. Godlovitch wants us not only to free ourselves from anthropocentrism but also biocentrism. Godlovitch goes on to say that nature is essentially unknowable and that attempts to appreciate nature that assume a knowledge of nature in order to avoid inappropriate attitudes are themselves inappropriate. He argues instead that science can never hope to uncover the full ‘facts’ of nature. It is only through admiring nature as a mystery, that we can ever truly appreciate it for what it is.

The first issue that arises from the Aloofness Model is that it seeks to prevent ‘wanton’ environmental destruction by appealing to aesthetic considerations. Budd quickly sums up this problem by pointing out that such behaviour can be immediately condemned not through aesthetics but due to the fact that it is ‘wanton’, meaning that there is no need to include a non-moral value in nature with the intent that it will prevent unnecessary damage to nature. If the damage is unnecessary, then that is reason enough to condemn it.

¹⁶⁰ Godlovitch, S. (2004) “Icebreakers: Environmentalism and Natural Aesthetics”.

¹⁶¹ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, p.143.

The next difficulty that the aloofness model throws up is that humans are not detached from nature. By wanting to us to be aloof from nature in order to appreciate it, Godlovitch is implying that humans are separate from nature, that we are not part of it. This is itself anthropocentric as to separate humans from nature implies a kind of bias towards humans; that humans are above nature and cannot be considered part of it. Although it is doubtful that this was Godlovitch's intent or belief, the separation of the natural world from the human world harks back to a problematic duality between the mental world and the physical world that may not be valid. Another complication that leads on from the detachment of the observer is that it does not represent a true image of how nature is. If humans are part of nature, it cannot represent a true image of nature if we remove humans completely from consideration. Godlovitch may not wish to imply that we are outside or apart from nature but as Budd says

"It seems as if Godlovitch derives our supposed distance from nature from the fact of our experiencing the world – something absent in most of nature- and our ability to reflect on the phenomenology of experiential states... But difference is not the same as, and does not imply, distance".¹⁶²

Budd also claims that the idea of the mystery of nature is not necessarily equaled to or related to the idea of aloofness. This is a genuine problem for Godlovitch that he does not adequately tackle. Though there may be much that we do not know about nature and there may be something to be said for thinking back to Kant's concept of disinterestedness and trying to step back from nature, the two do not have any relation to each other. The Aloofness Model therefore does not really further our understanding of the aesthetics of nature.

¹⁶² Ibid, p.145.

3.37 Budd's Model.

Budd provides a discussion of the aforementioned arguments before going on to conclude with his own approach to the aesthetic appreciation of nature. He concludes that since all the other models have, unsuccessfully in his opinion, attempted to create some variant of a set of rules in order to control the aesthetic appreciation of nature, he will provide no such system. He argues, in fact that

“the search for a model of the aesthetic appreciation of nature... (is) a chimerical quest”.¹⁶³

Budd claims that no knowledge or system is needed to help us distinguish one object from another as there is in art and that, furthermore, the fact that there is no artist in the aesthetic appreciation of nature means that there is no meaning or theory behind the creation of nature the way there often is in art and so no equivalent to an artist is needed. As Budd says,

“The answer to the question, ‘In the case of nature (i) what is to be aesthetically appreciated and (ii) how is it to be aesthetically appreciated? Is just this; (i) Whatever is available in nature for aesthetic appreciation (as nature), (ii) in whatever manner or manners it is possible to appreciate it aesthetically (as nature)”.¹⁶⁴

Budd wants to use freedom as the main characteristic of the aesthetic response to nature. He believes that what makes the aesthetic response to nature special is that, unlike the aesthetic response to art, we are not constrained to following theory or the intentions of

¹⁶³ Ibid, p.147.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, p.147.

creators in the way that we are in art. Rather than focusing on the negatives that this brings, Budd wishes to celebrate this point and use it as the defining and most valuable quality of the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

This approach has a major difficulty which is that Budd is completely ignoring the problem of inappropriate responses. This will only be discussed briefly here as this issue will come to the fore in later chapters, however it is enough for now to point out that there may be some responses to nature that we want to say are inappropriate to the aesthetic object or which are not appropriate to the aesthetic. Budd's theory has merit in that it embraces freedom for imagination and emotion that could lead to some very rich responses but such advantages do not outweigh the problem that it provides no criticism of any possible response at all. Without guidance there is nothing to stop one including irrelevant or biased imaginings from becoming involved.

A second problem for Budd that feeds into the first is that he does not define what exactly he is referring to by 'nature'. He does not make clear whether he is including humans and human products such as architecture as 'natural'. He does not let us know what can appropriately be thought of as an aesthetic appreciation of nature as there are no guidelines for what nature is. There is no theory given surrounding what it is that we should be focusing on. If we are told that anything natural can inspire us, we may refer to anything at all as everything is to some extent natural. It maybe that Budd is happy for all human products to be thought of as equally natural with a tree. There is no reason why an aesthetic theory cannot be created to incorporate that, but with no guidance for the observer whatsoever in terms of what to consider relevant and how to

consider it, the aesthetic appreciation of nature as referred to by Budd remains an unacceptably vague notion.

3.38 Aesthetics of Engagement.

The Aesthetics of Engagement model was suggested by Berleant and referred to the point that the involvement of humans in nature means that our aesthetic appreciation of nature is more likely to hold an element of engagement than the aesthetic appreciation of art, at least as the latter has been traditionally understood.¹⁶⁵ Berleant argues that it is in fact detrimental to the aesthetic experience to attempt to distance either the observer or the subject from their environments as suggested by the Object of Art Model. This model condemns and is in contrast to the subject-object, mind-body dualism contained in Kant, and the Landscape Model and the Natural Environment Model by way of its rejection of disinterestedness. In contrast to this however, it harks back to Kant in that it puts emphasis on the close relationship between perception and the resulting emotions in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Berleant argues that the experiences of the subject are as integral to the aesthetic response as the object itself, in virtue of the involvement of emotion, imagination, knowledge and beliefs.

One of the main benefits of Berleant's approach is that, as a non-science based approach, it provides a more flexible approach to appreciating nature. The complex character of nature means that our responses to nature are likely to be more complex. As previously discussed, we have a relationship with and are part of nature whose components all interact with each other. A disinterested stance runs the risk of ignoring

¹⁶⁵ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature".

the relationship we have with nature whilst the concept of attempting to distance the object under consideration from its surroundings could result in an inaccurate or less profound appreciation of nature. Under the Object of Art model, admiration of a clematis plant would involve attempting to mentally separate the form of the flower from its environment. In the case of a climbing flower such as the clematis, much of the beauty comes from the manner in which it twists its leaves around a trellis or entwines itself around a nearby tree. Berleant's aesthetics of engagement means that we are able to embrace the environment surrounding the object as well as the object's relationships to its surroundings in a way that the more rigid approaches would not allow for.

Another benefit of Berleant's approach is that it allows for more subjective elements to play a role in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Factors such as emotion or imagination can greatly enhance the appreciation of nature and should not be rejected completely as in the more cognitive approaches. If one is basing one's reactions to nature on scientific knowledge, then that reaction is objective rather than subjective. There can only be one correct response to the aesthetic experience. However this may not be desirable. It maybe that one wishes to claim that one's response to nature can differ without that response being incorrect. One person may respond to a rainy day as being sad. This is a common response that could therefore be considered correct and objective. However another individual may find that the rain is uplifting to them. Under an objective natural aesthetic this response may be considered wrong, as it does not conform to the expected response. This seems to be a very judgmental approach, which assumes that all individuals will respond to the same stimuli in the same manner.

A counter argument to the claim that a benefit of Berleant's model is its subjective character, is that subjectivism can cause several problems in the aesthetic appreciation of nature.¹⁶⁶ The first of these problems is that allowing subjective elements in the aesthetic appreciation of nature can lead to individuals manipulating the truth about an aspect of nature in order to enhance their perception of the object. An example of this is if one were to sanitize nature by ignoring that fact that much of nature is carnivorous.¹⁶⁷ Many people enjoy watching wildlife programs and admiring animals such as lions. They are certainly beautiful animals and can be extremely graceful as well as adorable to look at when young. The problem with some of these wildlife programs is that they may show lion cubs at play and note how attractive they are without appreciating the fact that the cubs will be practicing how to hunt and fight. Even in the more realistic programs, which may show animals hunting, the viewer's sympathy tends to lie with whichever animal the program has currently been following. When we have been watching the lions, we want the lions to have a successful hunt in order to survive; when watching the gazelles, we want the gazelles to survive the hunt and evade the lions. Given the opportunity we are often inconsistent or manipulative in our responses to nature, which inevitably affects our aesthetic appreciation of nature and leads them to be inappropriate.

Berleant's model is attractive in that it embraces the fact that humans are part of nature and that therefore the aesthetic response is going to be more engaged than in art and that, due to the lack of an artist, the response will also be much freer. It is in many

¹⁶⁶ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

¹⁶⁷ Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

ways a good description of how the aesthetic response to nature does occur, despite the problem just indicated.

3.4 Conclusion.

The approach to the aesthetic of nature that I will be basing my examination of emotion on is in certain respects a combination of many of these theories. I will be taking the position that the aesthetic response to nature is ultimately an experience that is perception based in the sense that it is the perceptual that triggers the aesthetic and the aesthetic object that guides the aesthetic response. I will be arguing however that Adorno is right in terms of involving society in that the associations that we have with the aesthetic object greatly influence the aesthetic response, that although it is the perceptual that is the basis of the aesthetic response, it is our associations with the aesthetic object that extend our response and involve imagination and emotion. It is also an important point to emphasise that the connection that we have with nature does, as Berleant argues, have an important role to play in the aesthetic response to nature. It is in fact the level of involvement that our society has with nature that often is the cause of social attitudes towards nature. As Adorno argues, the Western historical attitudes to nature can be linked to both the Bible and ideas regarding humans being made in God's image as well as the emphasis on reason that lead to the prominence of art theory over interest in the aesthetics of nature. A potential problem for this approach is that there are many aesthetic responses, particularly where emotions are concerned, that are not necessarily perception lead. A possible example would be a feeling of sadness as a result of knowledge that a woodland is about to be destroyed. The reply to this is that for the

response to be aesthetic as well as emotional, one must be appreciating the woodland whilst contemplating this knowledge. Even though one's conception of the woodland is altered by our individual knowledge, the aesthetic response still ultimately occurs as a result of the perceptual element. It is the sensory factor that triggers the response, without the experience of being in the woodland, one might not think of the destruction and certainly would not have been able to appreciate the habitat aesthetically. This description or theory of how one responds aesthetically to nature will be developed as I develop my theory regarding the role of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature.

Chapter 4 - How emotional responses to nature can occur.

In the last chapter, I discussed the similarities and differences between the aesthetic appreciation of art and the aesthetic appreciation of nature and concluded that they were similar enough in form that I could use the theory of how emotion occurs in art as a starting point for considering how emotional reactions in the aesthetic appreciation of nature occur. Having also discussed the proposed theories regarding how one responds aesthetically to nature we are aware that the aesthetic response tends to be more open in the case of nature in comparison to that of art due, for instance to the absence of an artist in nature. I have also argued that the emotions felt in response to the aesthetic appreciation of art are related to not only the artist but also the symbolism and notation in the artwork that is associated with a particular emotion. Therefore, I will be arguing in this chapter that emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are relative to our associations with the aesthetic object. Although there is no artist to express emotions through nature as an artwork, I will argue that there are still other associations that we place on to nature to which we respond emotionally.

As previously discussed, emotional responses to the aesthetic appreciation of art occur when the observer uses reason to make an emotional judgment about the artistic subject at hand. This emotion may be due to either an association made by the observer between the object and knowledge either of the art or from human experience and therefore the emotion felt may be the responsibility of the observer or a recognition of an emotion expressed in the art by the artist in which case the emotion felt would be

owed to the artist while being the responsibility of the observer to interpret.¹⁶⁸ The presence of intentionality in the creation of art means that it is possible for there to be an objective emotion associated with emotional responses to art though the role of the observer means that it is also possible to have subjective responses to art.¹⁶⁹ As both the appreciation of art and the appreciation of nature may be aesthetic, it is expected that emotional responses in the aesthetic appreciation of nature will be similar to emotional responses in the aesthetic appreciation of art. In chapter two, when I discussed how one was able to respond emotionally to art, I started by trying to identify where the emotion was based, whether it is “something the artist projects, something a performer adds or something the listener imagines in the art”.¹⁷⁰ In considering nature and emotion, I intend to begin in the same manner by considering what in the aesthetic appreciation of nature is the source of the emotion and then going on to discuss how this emotion is provoked in or by this source.

4.1 Can one respond emotionally to nature?

As in the aesthetic appreciation of art, it is necessary to prove that it is possible to respond emotionally in the aesthetic appreciation of nature before we can discuss how this emotional response is generated. The first point to be made in the attempt to prove that one may respond emotionally to nature is that if it is possible to respond emotionally to one type of aesthetic experience (art) then there seems no obvious reason why one may not respond emotionally to another type of aesthetic experience, for example, nature. If as I have argued previously, art and nature are essentially related due

¹⁶⁸ Kivy, P. (1993) “Auditor’s Emotions: Contention, Concession and Compromise”.

¹⁶⁹ Allen, R. T. (1990) “The Arousal and Expression of Emotion by Music”.

¹⁷⁰ Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An essay in the Aesthetics of Music*, p.127.

to the fact that they can both be responded to in an aesthetic manner, it is not unreasonable to presume that the aesthetic experience in each case would be significantly similar. The theory that applies to one may well be able to be applied to the other. As one can undoubtedly respond emotionally to art, so one should be able to respond emotionally to nature.

A further argument for the possibility of an emotional reaction to the aesthetic appreciation of nature is similar to an argument I used in chapter two where I argued that the language people use to describe art and the fact that some individuals claim to respond emotionally to art means that it must be possible to respond emotionally to art. Similarly, people claim to respond emotionally to nature and a good illustration of this is actually to be found in art. There are hundreds of paintings such as much of Monet's work that have been inspired by nature indicating that there may be emotional response to nature. The best example however is poetry. In 'Daffodils', Wordsworth was inspired by daffodils and claimed that when he was "In vacant or in pensive mood", he thought of the daffodils "And then my heart with pleasure fills, And dances with the daffodils".¹⁷¹ Clearly for Wordsworth, the sight of so many daffodils leads to an emotional aesthetic response. Wordsworth's poem is hardly alone in its sentiment. Coleridge in 'Lines on an Autumnal Evening' described another emotional aesthetic response to nature when he claims that a brook is "like peace" and the natural scenes

¹⁷¹ Wordsworth, W. (1972) "Daffodils." *The New Oxford Book of English Verse*, Ed. H. Gardner, The Chaucer Press, Bungay, UK, p. 506.

before him are the “scenes of my hope”.¹⁷² The fact that poets can use language like this to describe nature implies that they have experienced emotional responses to nature.

Another line of reasoning which establishes that one is able to respond emotionally to nature is the fact that I am able to use examples of emotional responses to nature that make sense to others. In the previous chapter I mentioned feeling peaceful in a meadow. If these emotional responses to nature were not common, then examples of such experiences would make sense to no one. My example of finding a meadow peaceful would not be common or understandable but instead, rather bizarre. It would not be immediately obvious to others that such a response was possible, let alone common enough to use as an example. The fact that some individuals claim that they have had emotional experiences to nature, means that such experiences are possible, regardless of whether they happen to everybody or not. If it is possible for an individual to record a natural aesthetic experience as being emotional, then one can only conclude that it is indeed possible for some individuals to feel emotion when aesthetically appreciating nature. So long as it is possible to respond emotionally to nature, the similarity of the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the aesthetic appreciation of art allows us to proceed to discuss how such a response occurs and what the source of this emotion actually is.

4.2 Emotion from the Artist.

The first possible factor that an observer could be responding emotionally to in an aesthetic experience is the artist or the emotion the artist has communicated through

¹⁷² Coleridge, S.T. (1991) “Lines on an Autumnal Evening”, *The Lakeland Poets*, Eds.J. Wilson, Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, p.12.

the aesthetic experience. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is not an obvious artist in nature. Unless one is religious there is no one mind planning the creation of each insect and plant and considering its layout. In art one is aware that the object one is admiring was created with a certain concept in mind and one can admire that concept or admire the skill of the artist who created it, which could lead to an emotional reaction to art. If we are admiring an artistic object, our perspective is influenced by the fact that the object was created as an artistic piece which allows us to think about the object not just as beautiful, but also as meaningful. The fact that art has an artist means that there may be objective emotions in art. In nature, as there is no artist, we can only judge the object on what we see, there is no concept to analyze, no hidden meaning to search for. We are free to interpret the object however we choose; it is subjective. We cannot claim to feel moved by the object's symbolism or by the skill it took to consider and create the object. There is no third party in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, only the observer and the aesthetic object. As in nature there is no creator whose skill can be admired, one cannot claim that the emotional response is due to the artist. There are some who would claim that God is the creator of nature and is therefore responsible for any 'artistic' concepts in nature, however as the existence of God cannot be proven, the existence of God as the artist in nature cannot be proven. Despite this there are many who would claim that emotional responses to nature are in fact due to an appreciation of God's work and could be considered a religious experience. A problem with using such experiences to claim that God is the artist in nature and is responsible for any emotional responses to nature is that it is possible to appreciate nature without having a belief in God. If this is the case then it cannot be the existence of God and God's involvement in nature that is the source

of the emotion in nature as otherwise it would not be possible to respond emotionally to nature without a belief in God. Although it is doubtlessly true that one's belief in God may well enhance some individual's aesthetic appreciations of nature, the fact that the emotional responses can occur without a belief in God, shows that they must have their source in something other than God as otherwise there could be no emotional response to nature without a belief in God.

Another potential artist in nature that could be considered the source of perceived emotion is the gardener, landscape designer, farmer, or environmental artist.¹⁷³ Gardeners arrange, prune and alter nature and therefore could be claimed to be the artists of nature and could also therefore create natural landscapes which contained notations of emotion that might be picked up on by the observer. In a garden it is possible to both observe the scenery and consider the methods and aims behind it. One can discuss the shape of a lawn or admire how a gardener has appropriately planted an area of shade.

"Gardeners do, however, take into account such painterly concerns as colour,

texture, balance, form, perspective, and light and shade in laying out grounds".¹⁷⁴

The plants in a garden have been deliberately placed for aesthetic effect and are not random occurrences. The involvement of the gardener changes the aesthetic appreciation of nature in a garden as in these areas there is a method as well and form to be admired.

A response to this is that gardens are not truly within the natural sphere. They are so controlled by humans that it could be claimed that they are actually art rather than a

¹⁷³ For a more in depth discussion of environmental artists see Ross, S. (1993) "Gardens, Earthwork, and Environmental Art".

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, p.165.

natural place. Art is more about human skill and concept than simple beauty.¹⁷⁵ Gardens are close to this because of the fact that they, like art, rely on human skill to tend plants and on concept in planning the design of the garden. The involvement of humans means that it is possible to claim that gardens are not suitable examples of natural environments. The fact that the gardener designs the layout of a garden means that the garden is not natural. True nature occurs by chance, which is often what gives it its charm. A garden is more like art than nature because it lacks this randomness. The fact that gardens are designed and planned; that they can be controlled so as to embody a particular idea, means that gardens are closer to art than they are to nature.

The problem with this claim is that even if we accept this idea that gardens are closer to art than nature, and are therefore taken out of the equation, humans could still be claimed to be the artists of nature due to the influence they have on the landscape. There is little nature left that has not been altered by humans whether we are considering fields, woodland or the even the ocean; humans have affected all of these habitats either directly or indirectly, both biologically and aesthetically. The influence of humans on nature is so pervasive that it is impossible to discount from this discussion all of nature that has been changed or affected by humans. However, whilst it is undoubtedly true that we may be aware of the effect of humans on whatever part of nature we are appreciating, we are still able to see true nature in what we see. For example humans do not create the form of the flower even if humans in some cases control where it happens to grow. The rose was not designed and created by a human despite whatever changes we have been able to breed into it. Nature may be alterable but its original form is its

¹⁷⁵ Carroll, N. (1999) *Philosophy of Art*.

own. Even where there is the most controlled nature as in a garden, there is still unaffected nature present such as the birds or insects and we are able to appreciate these apart from an artist. Unlike a true artist, humans can only influence nature; we cannot completely control every aspect of it and can never take credit for its invention.

It is possible to argue that the involvement of humans in the historic development of nature adds to the aesthetic value of nature. Humans have played a major role in shaping the landscape. Most of the landscapes we see show evidence of human influence whether it be that the land is divided into fields, evidence of old human habitation or evidence of paths. This involvement of humans can actually be complementary to the landscape and may be involved in our emotional responses to it. When visiting a World War Two battlefield, one might feel great sadness at all who died as well as enjoying the sight of the poppies swaying in the wind. The landscape may be beautiful, but the beauty is made more poignant by our knowledge of its history. The knowledge of human involvement in nature, much like knowledge of the creation of art, can enhance the aesthetic appreciation of nature and could therefore be claimed to play the role of artist in nature.¹⁷⁶ The problem with claiming that history is the artist of nature is that the relationship between humans and nature is not the relation of artist to art. The history of the battlefield did not occur in order to enhance the aesthetic experience; there is no intent to be aesthetic. The reason that the artist in art is so significant is because the artist has intentionality, which enables the aesthetic response to be objective. The history that so often enhances our environment did not occur in

¹⁷⁶ Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment".

order to be aesthetic or to add meaning to our landscape and so has not played the role of artist and can therefore not be the source of any emotion in nature.

A possible factor that could be considered “the artist of nature” and therefore the cause of any inherent emotion is evolution. After all, this is a process that shapes nature, determines its form and thereby fills the role of the artist in that it is responsible for the design of nature. The scientific processes involved in nature give something to analyze.¹⁷⁷ In art our appreciation of Dali’s ‘Metamorphosis of Narcissus’ is enhanced by our knowledge of the tale of Narcissus and by our knowledge of the surrealist movement. Carlson argued that the aesthetic appreciation of nature was similar to this in that one’s appreciation of a daisy may be enhanced by our knowledge that its radial arrangement of petals denotes it as one of the earlier flowers to evolve. Carlson believed that involving science in the aesthetic appreciation of nature brings it closer together with the aesthetic appreciation of art as in the same way that an understanding of art theory can give depth to our aesthetic appreciation of art, an understanding of science can give depth to our aesthetic appreciation of nature. Knowing the ‘history of production’ of an object whether it is the result of either natural or artistic production can enable one to appreciate the object fully and appropriately. If it is therefore possible to consider evolution the artist of nature, then it is possible that the source of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature is based in evolution. It could be that it is our instinct that tells us that meadows are peaceful. Historically maybe meadows were free from danger or one could see predators from a greater distance. If evolution has shaped the design of the landscape and is therefore responsible for our aesthetic reactions to nature, it could also be that our senses have evolved to respond in evolutionarily appropriate

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

ways to nature. A possible example that would support this view is the fact that most human societies find some aesthetic pleasure in water. Whether it is a lake, river, waterfall or sea, most human societies tend to find beauty in such places. This is demonstrated by the tendency to depict water in art or to visit it for recreational purposes. Considering the fact that most human societies were founded near, and were often dependent on, fresh water, it would be understandable if there were some genetic disposition that caused humans to be drawn aesthetically to water. If human societies other than our own tend to react in a similar way to nature, it could demonstrate that our aesthetic responses are more to do with instinct or genetic instinct than reason.

The problem with the idea that science is the artist of nature and therefore responsible for our emotional aesthetic experiences, is that evolution is not deliberate or planned. It is not even a separate entity, it is a process that does not make decisions or rules about what nature looks like; it is simply about survival. As evolution is not deliberate as an artist is, it is incorrect to attribute the source of emotion to it, as it cannot be capable of emotion. Evolution has no 'interest' in aesthetics or emotion and so cannot really be said to be responsible for the emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Claiming that evolution is the artist of nature implies that evolution is a separate entity capable of intent. Artists are important in the appreciation of art not simply because they are the creators of art, but because they have intent. They plan what they will create, decide on its meaning and symbolism. In nature, even if evolution is to be admired for creating ancient woodland, there was no intent to it. Evolution is often discussed as if it plans how nature will evolve, as if it is a separate being. However whilst we maybe able to predict how nature will evolve, for example in a woodland we

can observe succession, but there was never any plan or meaning to how the woodland evolves. It is as meaningless to congratulate evolution on the attractive form of a lily, as it would be to scold an oak for being unable to grow in acidic soil. As evolution has no intent, it can never be treated as an artist anymore than the sun can be treated as an artist for providing the light for the plants to grow. There can be, therefore, no artist in nature, only nature itself and its observers. If this is so then we cannot hold the creation or creator of nature responsible for our emotional responses to nature and must look elsewhere for the source.

4.3 Emotion from the Aesthetic Object: Nature.

In the aesthetic appreciation of nature, the focus of our attention is nature and therefore it seems obvious that we would look to nature as the source of any emotion we feel when observing it just as we might look to art as the source of any emotion felt in the case of emotion arising from the aesthetic response to art. If we feel peaceful in a meadow, it would be logical to assume that there is something about the meadow we are responding to in order to feel this way, that there is some stimulus in the meadow that causes us to respond with a feeling of peace. As there is no artist in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, the factor that the observer responds to must lie in nature. There must be some sign or factor that accounts for one claiming that the meadow is peaceful; to say that the meadow is peaceful implies that there is something in the meadow that is, or represents to us, peace.¹⁷⁸ The fact that people do have a tendency to respond in the same way to the same habitats further indicates that there is something objective,

¹⁷⁸ Goodman, N. (1976) *Languages of Art* – See ‘Reality Remade’ (pp.3–40) for a general discussion on how concepts are prepresented in art.

something belonging to the habitat that provokes a particular reaction. The source of the emotion may be nature itself as it is nature that one is making a judgment about when one claims that one is having an emotional aesthetic experience of nature.

The immediate problem with attributing the source of emotion to nature is that it is anthropomorphic to claim that nature itself is emotional. To claim that nature is expressive of emotion when it is inanimate can lead to responses to nature that are sentimentalized and trivial.¹⁷⁹ By attributing false attributes to nature, we cease to appreciate it for its true merits and start to value it for false, projected characteristics instead. Obviously this subject will be discussed in much greater depth in a later chapter however at this stage it is sufficient to say that claiming that emotion originates in nature assumes that nature is either capable of feeling emotion or possesses some special qualities that enables it to express emotion. Not only is it obviously wrong and sentimental to claim that a rainy day feels sad, it trivializes the aesthetic value that nature has as by claiming that some of this aesthetic value comes from its' humanized abilities.

A possible response to this problem is that whilst it may be wrong to claim that a rainy day feels sad, it may not be incorrect to say that the rainy day *is* sad. This would no longer imply that the rainy day was capable of feeling but that there is something about the rainy day that possesses a sense of sadness. If this were true then the reason one claims that a rainy day is sad is because there is something about a rainy day that is sad. The emotion does not come from us but from the rainy day itself. The problem with

¹⁷⁹ This is a problem that will be discussed in much greater depth in later chapters in reference to the appropriate and inappropriate in nature and can be referenced to Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" for an overview.

this is that it is still attributing properties to nature that it does not possess. If the emotion was within nature, one could never claim that the rainy day was not sad; it would be an empirical truth that the day was sad. However, although one can recognize a tendency in people to respond in a particular manner to nature, one's reaction can still vary. I might actually find a rainy day uplifting, particularly after a long period of drought or as a relief from humidity. Furthermore, to claim that nature possesses emotion is human-centered as it assumes that everything is concerned with the human sphere of reactions. As far as we are aware it is only humans that are capable of emotional aesthetic responses and therefore there is no reason that there should be emotion embedded in nature when it only concerns us. Considering that other animals do not behave as if they find rainy days sad, it seems more likely that humans are responding to a factor in the rainy day that they find sad, rather than the rainy day being intrinsically sad.

A second problem with assuming that there is something about nature that embodies emotion is that this would not allow for the fact that different people respond differently to nature. If a meadow embodies peace, then how is it that there are some who would not find the meadow peaceful? It could be claimed that such individuals are simply mistaken but there are, as discussed by Berleant, whole cultures that respond differently to nature.¹⁸⁰ An example of this is found in environmental attitudes. If it were not for the fact that humans in the western world have little to fear from nature, it is unlikely that our culture would have such sympathy towards it.¹⁸¹ The very fact that we are no longer subservient to nature means that we can afford to behave charitably

¹⁸⁰ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature".

¹⁸¹ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

towards it. It is very easy to cry out against destroying rainforests when your family does not depend on the revenue to buy food. The example of rainforests illustrates how two people could experience the same part of nature and react completely differently towards it because of their situation. If the emotions of the aesthetic appreciation of nature are imbedded in nature itself, then it is hard to explain why two individuals respond so differently to it. Furthermore, as discussed in the first chapter, emotions are, to some extent, based on reason. Therefore it is inevitable that any emotional aesthetic responses we have to nature are also based on a degree of reason. The fact that reason is involved in the emotional aesthetic appreciation of nature means that it is likely that as different individuals have different experiences, knowledge and thought processes, their reasoning will differ as well. This could therefore reasonably lead to different individuals having different emotional responses to nature. In responding to a rainforest I am likely to be influenced by my knowledge of how quickly rainforests are being destroyed and of their ecological wealth. Conversely, another individual might be influenced by their knowledge that there is money to be made in logging and in cattle ranches as well as their need for a job and money. Both responses are based on reason and on facts and therefore our responses would differ greatly. If the emotion was intrinsic to the rainforest, then our reason would either not be able to play a part or our reason would inevitably lead us to a mutual conclusion. As this is not necessarily the case, it cannot be possible for the emotion to belong to the nature one is appreciating.

A counterargument to this is that although two people are able to respond differently to nature, one individual has responded correctly and one incorrectly. It is possible that the individual who wishes to protect the rainforests is actually responding

incorrectly as a result of their not being dependent on the rainforest's timber. In this case we may still use reason to respond to nature but use our reason to come to the wrong conclusion. I am using reason incorrectly and from a biased point of view. The problem with this is that it is not the occasional individual that has a different reaction to nature, whole cultures respond in a different manner to nature and it seems biased towards our own culture to assume that our culture is the one that is correct in its reactions or that an entire culture could be responding inaccurately to nature. The appreciation of nature often involves many complex issues that it may not always be appropriate to leave out of consideration. On seeing a White Tiger on television, my appreciation of the beautiful creature is tempered by sadness that there are only a hundred left in the world and that they are all in captivity. Furthermore, it is very difficult to decide which reaction is correct and which is not as the circumstances and knowledge surrounding each individual and their reactions to nature are unique. It could just as easily be claimed that someone wishing to protect the rainforest was too sentimental about the rainforest, or that those living and working in the rainforest were too close to the rainforest to see the big picture. Another example of how our experience can influence our perceptions of nature is that of someone who has been struck by lightening and survived. It would not seem fair to claim that their fearful response to a lightening storm is inappropriate or too self-interested. They may still be able to find the storm beautiful but may well have a great deal more respect for the forces of nature than another individual who may enjoy the risk of being out in the storm. This second individual also has their own valid reasons for how they perceive and appreciate the storm, which may also involve beauty and danger but may respond in a different manner. Our justification or complaint can be

made about almost any emotional response to nature and if this is the case, then it becomes extremely difficult to claim that one response to nature is wrong and another is right. If there are not objective aesthetic properties in nature then there cannot be any definite quality in nature that defines how one should respond emotionally to it. Our emotional aesthetic responses are so linked to our own perspective and experience that it is too dogmatic to claim that one response is wrong and another right, meaning that it cannot be true that the emotion lies within nature itself.

If nature were the source of emotion, the emotion attributed to nature would be an empirical truth rather than a subject for discussion. If the emotion was intrinsic to nature, there could only be one correct way of responding to nature and all other ways would have to be considered mistaken. As discussed, the fact that two people can react in two different yet valid ways to nature means that the aesthetic appreciation of nature must be subjective. If the emotion one feels when responding to nature is subjective rather than objective, it must be the subject rather than the object that is the source of the emotion. We must therefore go on to discuss how the individual is the source of the emotion felt and how it is that these emotions arise.

4.4 Observer.

If it is possible for one to respond emotionally to nature, then it is possible to claim that it is from the observer that the emotion comes. As discussed, the emotion one feels in response to nature cannot be in response to an artist or inherent in nature itself, which leads us to the conclusion that it is the observer that is responsible for any

emotion felt in response to nature.¹⁸² When one responds emotionally to art, one is often responding to an emotion invested in it by the artist. In nature there is no artist so it is not possible for the observer to make the connection between the emotion they feel in response to the art and the emotion that may have been felt or expressed by the artist. This indicates that it is the observer who creates the emotion. Even in art, where there is an artist, many emotional reactions to art are not designed or intended by the artist but are merely a reaction by the observer. The fact that in art one can react emotionally in a manner that was not intended by the artist further indicates that the source or cause of emotion must involve the observer. As previously discussed, nature itself cannot be considered the necessary source of the emotion as the different reactions of different individuals to the aesthetic appreciation of nature means that the emotional response to nature cannot be objective. Furthermore, the fact that we cannot claim that the source of the emotion is inherent in nature, indicates that it is the observer that impresses their emotions onto nature. If one associates a meadow with peacefulness, it is not that the meadow is peaceful or possesses peace, it is because one has made some association or judgment that has lead one to speak of the meadow as peaceful and therefore it is the individual who has made the judgment that is the source of any emotion that arises from this judgment. It is sentimental to claim anything other than humans are responsible for their own emotional responses to nature. When one responds emotionally to nature, it is possible and perhaps probable that there is something in nature that has triggered the emotion in oneself, but the source of the emotion is still the observer. When one feels peaceful in response to the meadow, it is not because the meadow possesses peacefulness or because one believes the meadow was created with peacefulness in

¹⁸² Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An Essay in the Aesthetics of Music*, p.127.

mind; one responds with a feeling of peacefulness because there is something in the individual that disposes him or her to feel peaceful under certain conditions.

There are two main theories that deal with how the observer may be the source of the emotion in emotional aesthetic experience. These are Arousal Theory and Cognitivism and were discussed previously in reference to the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of art. They can now be applied to the aesthetic appreciation of nature in order to further argue and clarify how the observer is the source of the emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

4.41 Arousal Theory.

As discussed in chapter two, in connection with music, arousal theory is the theory that

“a passage of music is expressive of an emotion if and only if it arouses that emotion, or possesses a tendency to arouse that emotion”,¹⁸³

meaning that if one responded to a piece of music by feeling sad, then that piece of music would be expressive of sadness. In nature this would mean that when a meadow arouses a feeling of peace, the meadow would be expressive of peace. Arousal Theory does not assume that the meadow is objectively peaceful but that it is peaceful because it is felt to be so by the observer rather than because the observer recognizes some pattern in it which leads them to believe the meadow is peaceful. An example of this would be that when one responds to a pet such as a kitten with a feeling of delight, this simply means that the kitten must inspire delight in the observer. Any emotion felt by the

¹⁸³ Beever, A. (1998) “The Arousal Theory Again?” pp.82.

observer is there simply as a result of the observer having that emotion rather than because of any meaning in nature or any logical process that the observer has gone through. Arousal Theory does not attempt to explain why the individual felt the emotion; it simply claims that the emotion felt is the emotion that has been expressed. In other words, the object is expressive of a particular emotion such as happiness by virtue of the observer responding to the object with a feeling of happiness.

One flaw that can be found in Arousal Theory is that it could be claimed that it is wrong to speak of nature as expressing emotions. Despite the fact that it is a theory that claims that the emotion originates in the observer, the language it uses indicates that nature is expressive of the emotion felt and that therefore the emotion is attributed to nature. It could be claimed that this is inappropriate when referring to nature as it implies intent or sentience in nature. Claiming that nature is expressive of emotion is anthropomorphic as it transfers human emotions onto a non-human object. The thunderstorm is not angry or relaxed; it simply exists. Claiming that my ability to feel peaceful in a meadow means that the meadow is expressive of peace is incorrect, sentimental and trivializes the true value of nature. By projecting an emotion onto nature, can lead one to an incorrect understanding of nature as well as possibly causing one to focus on the emotions nature expresses rather than appreciating nature for the attributes it truly possesses.

The counter claim that an Arousal Theorist would make to this problem is that Arousal Theory does not claim that the responsibility of the emotion lies with nature. Arousal Theory simply states that if one has responded to an object with sadness, then the object must be expressive of sadness. Rather than ascribing the emotion to nature,

the arousal theorist is actually talking about the emotion as being aroused by the observer and how it is that this emotion is aroused. This is a fair reply and it is true the emotion felt may be projected onto the object, which would still mean that the object was expressive of that emotion. However the language used is still misleading even if it is not mistaken. Claiming that an object is expressive of sadness does imply that the object possesses expressiveness; regardless of the fact that what one means is that it arouses an emotion. This means that whilst the claim that Arousal Theory is sentimental can mostly be dismissed, one should be wary of the language involved to avoid confusion.

Another problem with Arousal Theory is that the emotion felt may not be the emotion expressed by nature. When discussing art and arousal theory I argued that if one could feel a different emotion to the one being expressed by the art, this would invalidate arousal theory as the emotion felt would be different to the one being expressed. If I were to respond to a love song with irritation then the love song should, by Arousal Theory standards, be expressive of irritation rather than love. This obviously caused great problems for Arousal Theory in art and was one of the reasons it was rejected as a solution. In nature there is no artist to place an objective emotion in the aesthetic object so it could be that this is not such a problem. However it is still possible to have inappropriate reactions to nature. If I feel relaxed whilst watching a thunderstorm, arousal theory would indicate that the thunderstorm was relaxing. This is not the common perception of thunderstorms and could be said to be inappropriate, as it would mean disregarding the threat of the thunderstorm. The counterargument to this that an Arousal Theorist would raise is that claiming that one's response to nature can be

considered inappropriate or that there is some common perception of a thunderstorm would indicate that one's emotional responses to nature are objective rather than dependent on the observer and would therefore invalidate treating the emotion as originating with the observer. The counterargument raises an important point in that in a subjective theory such as those based on the observer being responsible for the felt emotion, it may appear that it is not possible for any response to be considered 'wrong'. However this is not necessarily the case. In Arousal Theory this may be the case as whatever emotion is felt by the observer is the emotion nature may be said to be expressive of, but in another theory, such as one based on the observer using reason, one would be able to criticize the response based on the fact that the observer's reason may be faulty. It is therefore a problem for Arousal Theory that if an individual has a reaction to nature that could be considered 'wrong', there is no way to criticize the individual's reaction and any trivial or improper reaction must be accepted as valid.

A further problem for Arousal Theory that also sheds some light on the character of emotional reactions to nature, is that one can recognize a tendency to respond in a certain emotional manner to nature without feeling those emotions oneself. This causes a problem for Arousal Theory as it shows that there is more guiding our emotional responses to nature than simply our feelings. In this chapter I have mentioned examples of emotional reactions to nature such as feeling peaceful in a meadow or feeling sad in the rain. If it were not possible to recognize a tendency in how one responds to nature, then my examples would make no real sense as one could not know that one could feel peaceful in a meadow as one had never experienced it. If there was no tendency to feel peaceful in a meadow, I could have just as easily used feeling jealous in a meadow and

expected it to be as clear an example. The fact that there is this tendency shows, much in the same way as when one individual's response differs from another, that Arousal Theory does not attempt to offer any real explanation of why these responses occur. As previously discussed, emotions are based on a degree of logical reasoning. Our emotions are a result of judgments based on reason. This reason is in turn dependent on the associations we have with the aesthetic object. The logic we use to make our judgments may be faulty and we may be lacking in knowledge but this does not change the fact that this is how our emotions are formed.¹⁸⁴ If this is how we form emotions in ordinary life, there is no reason why our emotional responses to nature should be different. This is why the example of feeling peaceful in a meadow is appropriate because it is then possible to understand why one would respond in such a manner whereas it would be illogical to respond to a meadow by feeling jealous. The fact that emotions involve reason mean that Arousal Theory cannot be a full explanation of how one responds emotionally to nature as it does not allow any role for judgment in how one responds emotionally. One can therefore dismiss Arousal Theory as an inadequate explanation and move on to discuss another theory, which does involve reason and judgment in how one responds to nature.

4.42 Cognitivism.

Cognitivism is the view that the reason one responds emotionally to nature is that we use reason to make an emotional judgment about nature. We are able to use logic and our experience to form an attitude towards the object we are observing. This

¹⁸⁴ Calhoun, C. (1984) "Cognitive emotions" pp. 327-342

form of cognitivism is not to be confused with the ‘realist’ cognitivist theory associated with moral philosophy that argues that emotional values are objective properties that can be discovered by use of reason. Rather this form of Cognitivism is linked to the philosophy of mind in that it argues that the feeling of emotion must necessarily involve the making of reason-based judgments about the object or event to which one is responding emotionally. As discussed in chapter one, emotion and reason are linked and therefore any emotional response we have in the aesthetic appreciation of nature is based on some kind of logical process.¹⁸⁵ An example of this is when one claims that a meadow is peaceful. When one does this there is a reason why one finds the meadow peaceful. It is not a random event; we believe the meadow to be peaceful. We may believe that we are safe from strangers there; that we can get away from work and the everyday stresses of life in the meadow. It could be that there are not many people about, which allows us some privacy or that we find watching the birds and animals restful. This all leads us to feel peaceful in the meadow. Another example is the feeling of awe we may feel at seeing a thunderstorm. This reaction is a result of having knowledge of how dangerous these storms can be as well as an instinctive fear of the noise and the flashing light. When we experience a thunderstorm, we are confronted with loud thunder, a lightning display and heavy rain. This appeals to our instincts and may frighten us whilst also appealing to our knowledge of thunderstorms that allows us to detach from the fear, enabling us to feel awe at the display. As well as this there may be an appreciation of the dramatic sight of lightning streaking across the sky. These factors put together might well lead to the aesthetic judgment that the storm was

¹⁸⁵ Solomon, R. (1980) “Emotion and Choice”.

awesome and one would react emotionally accordingly. These reactions are all linked to reason, whether they are based in knowledge, instinct or sentimental assumption.

Cognitivism is a subjective theory, which allows for people to intelligibly respond to nature with very different emotions. It allows for an individual to be fully engaged with the subject at hand rather than taking a more inflexible, disinterested approach. With a subjective theory of the emotional aesthetic appreciation of nature, there is no definite emotion that should be felt, the emotion felt is the responsibility of the observer. There is room in a subjectivist theory for the involvement of subjective facts such as imagination and experience that could not play a role in an objectivist theory. Although the roles of knowledge and reason are crucial in the Cognitivist's description of the emotional experience, this does not mean that what is known or rationally recognized are objective emotional properties of nature. The Cognitivist's point, rather, is that when one responds emotionally to an object, a judgment is being made about the non-emotional properties that the natural object possesses.¹⁸⁶

One benefit of Cognitivism is that it accounts for the fact that one individual may respond differently to nature than another. This difference can be explained by the fact that one individual may have different experiences and knowledge regarding the aesthetic object than another individual, resulting in a different emotional response to the aesthetic object. As this is what we base our emotional judgments on, it is no surprise that if these factors differ, so will the judgment we make. If one had never seen a thunderstorm before it is likely that one would be so scared that one would not be able to detach from the danger it presents to us. On the other hand one might not realize that

¹⁸⁶ Sharpe, R.A. (2000) *Music and Humanism – An essay in the Aesthetics of Music*.

the thunderstorm was dangerous and would only experience it as pretty rather than with a feeling of awe. This difference might be dependent on one's experiences of loud noises being threatening or how our experiences have taught us to feel about nature in general. Either reaction can be understood as different from the reaction of someone used to electrical storms and the differences are easily accounted for by examining the reason and knowledge involved. Another example of this is the fact that there are many people with a phobia of spiders whereas others are either indifferent or even appreciative of them. A possible reason for one to have a phobia of spiders is that they bite or that some are poisonous. One might also find the fact that they have eight eyes unsettling, as they can see all around them. Many people also find the way that spiders move unpleasant as they can move quickly and get into any space. Alternatively, those that appreciate spiders may base their judgments on the fact that although all spiders bite, most do not have strong enough jaws to break the skin. They are also fascinating from a scientific point of view as their evolution has led to them being an incredibly successful species. Either reaction to spiders is based on a judgment about spiders. Some may be ill informed, others illogical, but they are still rational judgments (in that reason was involved) that have shaped what is in many cases a very emotional reaction to nature. This means that although emotional responses to nature are subjective, there are circumstances under which one might be able to claim that a particular emotional response to an object is inappropriate if the emotional judgment has been based on either incorrect information or faulty logic.

Another benefit of Cognitivism is that it offers an explanation for how it is possible that one might be able to predict how someone else might respond to a natural

object without actually feeling the emotion oneself. This means that Cognitivism explains why I can predict that my response to Niagara Falls is likely to be one of awe even though I have never seen Niagara Falls. An example of this is to refer again to the examples I have been using throughout this thesis. As I have said before, in order for the examples I use to be effective, they must be examples that others can relate to. The experience of feeling peaceful in a meadow is an experience that others may have shared or can imagine. One can understand the example of feeling peaceful in the meadow because it is a response based on reasons that others can appreciate. It is a reasonable response that others can easily relate to. One can imagine that one could be alone and not have to be bothered by other people or that it would be quiet in the meadow. One could picture oneself feeling comfortable and safe. Responding to the meadow with a feeling of peace makes sense because one can understand how one could come to the conclusion that the meadow is peaceful. This explains why I am able in some cases to anticipate other people's reaction to nature. I can predict that there are many people who will respond to a hurricane with fear just as I can predict that 'storm chasers' may respond to the hurricane with awe. I can anticipate these reactions, as I know that a hurricane will bring great devastation as well making one aware of the power of nature. By considering the facts I know about hurricanes, I can predict how others might respond to them. If one can recognize the usual emotional response to a particular natural scene without feeling the emotion or anticipate what another person's response to nature could be, this indicates that the emotional response to nature is, like the emotional response to art, linked to reason.

A further argument for claiming that knowledge influences how the observer responds to nature appeals to the types of emotional response one may have. In chapter two I discussed Allen's theory that there are three types of emotional response to art; evoked (mirrored) emotion, communicated (artist based) emotion and provoked (associated) emotion.¹⁸⁷ An example of evoked emotion would be responding to Juliet's sadness in 'Romeo and Juliet' by feeling sad whereas a communicated emotion would be when one recognizes that the artist was feeling joyful when they created a piece of music. In nature there is no artist and no emotion inherent in nature to be mirrored and therefore evoked and communicated emotional responses cannot occur. One cannot respond to nature by mirroring its emotion or interpret the intent of the artist, as there is no artist or emotion inherent in nature to detect. This means that it must therefore be provoked emotion that is felt when responding to nature. This means that any emotional response we have to nature must be based on some kind of association with what we see, for example, when we feel a meadow to be peaceful, we reach that conclusion through associating solitude with peace and birdsong with a lack of danger. It is not that we feel the meadow was created with peace in mind or that the meadow feels or is expressive of peace that leads us to our conclusion that the meadow is peaceful but an association based on a form of knowledge. This demonstrates the point that one can respond to art in either an objective manner as with evoked and communicated emotion or with the subjective provoked emotion. That Allen's theory fits for both the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the aesthetic appreciation of art further indicates that Cognitivism is correct in claiming that reason and emotion are linked.

¹⁸⁷ Allen, R. T. (1990) "The Arousal and Expression of Emotion by Music".

Another philosopher whose ideas support the concept that emotional aesthetic responses to nature are linked to our knowledge and experiences is J.M. Howarth in her paper 'Nature's Moods'.¹⁸⁸ She examines emotion not in terms of the aesthetic response to nature such as in this thesis, but rather in looking at nature as being expressive of certain moods just as one might talk of art as being expressive of emotion. Howarth argues that in this context it is more appropriate to speak of moods and claims that these moods are reflective of the observer's experience of and relation to the aesthetic scene. As in recognition theory Howarth argues that it is the recognition of behaviour that one would associate with a particular emotion that enables the observer to recognize a mood in nature, an argument which supports the position I am arguing for. She argues that,

“nature can ‘echo’ our moods because it moves in detectably similar, if mysterious, ways”¹⁸⁹

and offers the example of a stormy sea and compares it to someone who is experiencing a feeling of rage. The violent behaviour of the waves mirrors the violent feeling of anger. One makes associations between familiar emotional behaviour and the landscapes and aesthetic objects that one sees. It would obviously be problematic to claim that the emotions belong or are felt by nature but the associations that one has help us associate certain moods with nature so that it is common to respond to nature as if it *is* emotional. We are able to sense other's emotions due to the behaviour they exhibit and therefore it is not surprising that one would use these same skills to respond to nature, regardless of whether it is appropriate or not. This demonstrates that the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are connected to the associations we have with the aesthetic object.

¹⁸⁸ Howarth, J.M. (1995) "Nature's Moods", *The British Journal of Aesthetics*, Vol. 35, No. 2, pp. 108-120.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid*, p. 115.

Another argument for Cognitivism is that one is able to alter one's response to nature. If one can alter one's emotions regarding nature then there must be a factor in the aesthetic appreciation of nature that can change. As this cannot be the aesthetic object itself (as this would then be a different aesthetic experience) there must be something external to the object capable of changing such as the observer's knowledge of the aesthetic object. As I have already mentioned, there are many people who have a phobia of spiders. There are, however many people who have managed to overcome their fears or phobias through changing their knowledge or experiences associated with the object of their fears. This is often done by learning more about the animals and by gradually spending more time around them to change one's experiences of them. By changing one's knowledge of spiders, one can convince oneself that they are not a threat anymore and therefore come to feel differently about them. Another example of this is the way in which many environmental groups campaign. One of the most common methods of encouraging people to care about environmental issues is to inform them of the facts. When trying to raise consciousness regarding the destruction of the rainforests, the best method is to advertise the statistics regarding how many species are becoming extinct each day. Similarly the recent growth of the organic food market has been in direct response to information on the problems of insecticides, pesticides and Genetically Modified Foods. Many people have been alarmed by the information they have read and have therefore chosen to change the type of food they buy. Environmental campaigning is mostly about making people aware of environmental problems in the hope the one can provoke an emotional reaction.¹⁹⁰ Considering the

¹⁹⁰ Gaber, I. (2000) "The Greening of the Public, Politics and the Press, 1985-1999" in *The Daily Globe – Environmental Change; The Public and the Media*, Eds. J. Smith, Earthscan Publications Ltd, London,

power of the green consumer in the Western world, this is a successful tactic, which demonstrates the fact that people's emotions can be changed by providing knowledge. If information about a natural aesthetic object can change our emotional aesthetic responses to that natural object, then there must be a role for knowledge in the emotional aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Another advantage that Cognitivism has over Arousal Theory is that Cognitivism enables us to have sensible debates with others over our differing responses to nature. The fact that these responses are based on logic and experience means that it is possible to understand how two people can disagree over an emotional response and then change their minds after some discussion. Disagreements may be caused by different perceptions of the facts surrounding the responses. An example of this is if I were to have a friend who was afraid of water and therefore disliked lakes; by encouraging the friend to focus on the colour of the water and the beautiful surroundings, it is possible that I could convince the friend to respond differently to the lake. As the aesthetic responses we have for nature can be explained with reason, it is possible to persuade others to add our reasoning to their own in order to change their response.

It could be argued that the fact that knowledge is involved in the emotional aesthetic appreciation of nature, means it is actually objective. After all, if one has based one's reaction on fact, then the response could be considered correct. If I can predict how someone else will react to a particular natural aesthetic experience, then there must be some objective facts that allow me to do so. A response to this is that even though an opinion may be based on fact, another person's opinion may be based on a different fact

or experience. For example, if one based an affection for the daisy based on the knowledge that it was one of the earliest flowers to evolve, it could be said that this fact lead to the appreciation of the flower being objective. However if one perceived the daisy as a troublesome weed, one might well have a very different reaction. Cognitivism may involve objective facts such as a daisy being one of the earliest flowers to evolve, but that still means that because of the variety of facts involved, and the inclusion of experience, the emotional response to the aesthetic appreciation of nature is still subjective. This characteristic of Cognitivism that allows us to convince others of our own viewpoint does not mean that our emotional aesthetic responses to nature are objective, rather that despite the fact that two individuals may share the same knowledge regarding an object, they may still respond to the object with different emotions due to the fact that each individual may prioritize the knowledge they have regarding the object in different ways. In the example of the lake, one individual may find the thought of the murkiness of the bottom of the lake too compelling to ever feel at ease with the lake and may feel it to be mysterious and threatening whilst another may believe that no danger associated with the lake could detract from it's tranquil beauty. Neither of these responses are 'wrong' as they are based on sound reasoning, the differences are simply because of what part of the information available each individual felt was the most significant.

4.5 Conclusion.

The ability and tendency of people to speak of experiencing emotional aesthetic responses to nature demonstrates that such responses are possible. The absence of an

artist in nature means that there can be no intent in the presence of an emotion in nature and the fact that people can respond in different ways to nature (as well as the point that attributing emotions to nature veers towards anthropomorphism) means that the emotion cannot be inherent to nature. This means that the emotion must come from the observer. As it is the observer who is responsible for the emotion, it is logical to assume that there is something about the observer's experience of the aesthetic object that is responsible for the observer to feel as they do. One such factor is the properties one believes and recognizes the aesthetic object to have. The belief may be faulty or illogical, but it is still the information that the observer uses to make their judgment about the aesthetic object. The fact that judgments are involved follows on from the idea that emotions are judgments based on our knowledge. As ordinary everyday emotions are formed using knowledge it would be illogical to assume that when responding to an aesthetic experience, we suddenly change the way we form emotions. The emotional aesthetic appreciation of nature appears at this stage to be a subjective response that the observer makes in response to the natural aesthetic object based on the observer's current knowledge and experience. This theory follows on from the concept that emotions are judgments that we make and are responsible for. This type of knowledge based response is similar to that experienced in art but differs in that the presence of an artist in art allows there to also be objective emotions felt, either those reflected onto the observer in response to the art or felt by the observer in sympathy with the artist. The emotional response is different from the aesthetic appreciation of art due to the presence of intent in art. The fact that art is not created with intent was the major difference found to exist between art and nature when they were discussed in the previous chapter and this

difference is reflected in the fact that the observer can never respond to the intent in nature. Having discussed how the emotional response is created, one must then go on to discuss what the knowledge and experiences are that enable us to form the emotional judgments we do regarding nature and how we form the associations we have with natural aesthetic objects.

Chapter 5 - Relativism, Goodman and “Worldmaking”.

In this chapter I aim to explain the concept of relativism and how it is related to the aesthetic response. I will start by exploring what is meant when one uses the terms “logic” and “knowledge” when discussing relativism before going on to look at how we gain the “knowledge” or beliefs that we use to make judgments about the world. I will be in particular discussing Nelson Goodman’s ideas about ‘worldmaking’ and explaining how this concept affects our understanding of the aesthetic response, before considering some of the problems associated with relativism. This may appear to take the focus of the thesis away from the role of emotion in the aesthetic response to nature but it is necessary to fully discuss relativism and how one come to respond to nature as one does in order to fully understand the emotions felt in response to nature properly.

The concept of knowledge is crucial to understanding how it is that humans make judgments. As discussed in the first chapter, emotional responses are judgments that are formed partly on the basis of the beliefs we have about a situation.¹⁹¹ Emotional responses to nature therefore involve making judgments about the aesthetic object. These judgments are based on the beliefs we have about the object. It is important to emphasize that it is not the case that these beliefs or items of “knowledge”, nor the reasoning or logic on which they may depend are necessarily objectively correct or true. Our “knowledge” may be based on lies or half-truths and our reasoning may be unreasonable or lacking in calibre. So while I shall speak of emotional responses being based on ‘knowledge’ and ‘logic’ or ‘reason’, these terms do not carry the implication – as, perhaps, they ordinarily do – of objective truth or validity. I am using them in, as it

¹⁹¹ Calhoun, C. (1984) “Cognitive emotions”.

were, ‘inverted comma’ senses (rather as, for example, Michel Foucault uses the term ‘knowledge’ when he writes of the ‘knowledge’ that informs social practices).¹⁹² Indeed a main aim of this chapter is to argue that the knowledge and logic on which emotional responses to nature are based are not objective, but powerfully shaped by cultural and personal influences. An example of this as discussed on page 152 is of the aesthetic response of feeling peaceful in a meadow. There are possible reasons for this response, such as believing that we are safe or that we will not be bothered by work when we are in the meadow. It is more private, meaning that one does not have to worry about traffic or the phone ringing; it may suggest to us the possibility of a more simple life. Although these are reasons that one could genuinely use to explain one’s aesthetic response to a meadow that does not mean that these reasons are necessarily completely logical and true. The ‘knowledge’ that one uses to make aesthetic judgments is belief. It may or may not be true that one is less bothered by others in a meadow. Meadows are generally public spaces and one has no control over whom one may see there. The reasons that one uses to respond to nature are psychological states, and hence are subjective. So, to repeat, when the term ‘knowledge’ is used, it is not used to mean objective truths but instead to mean the beliefs one has, right or wrong, about the object one is appreciating.

5.1 Relativism and ‘Worldmaking’.

One major philosopher who argues that responses to the world are not objective is the relativist Nelson Goodman. He believes that we create our own worlds based on the ‘truths’ that we come to believe or, rather, ‘make’ and that there are many ‘true

¹⁹² Sheridan, A. (1980) *Michel Foucault: The Will to Truth*, Travistock Publications Ltd, London

versions' of the world rather than only one possible view.¹⁹³ Truth, for Goodman, can, like a landscape, be seen from many angles under many different lights; all reveal a 'true' image even though each image is different and many may be in conflict with each other. Goodman claims that just as a photo only portrays one aspect of an object, view or situation, so we can from our viewpoint only see limited aspects of the truth.¹⁹⁴ A series of photos of a landscape is a good illustration of this. As all the photos show the landscape from a different perspective or a different time of day, the photos may look very different from each other and may even look like pictures of different landscapes. Despite the differences in the photos, they all show a true image of the landscape even though they differ so much. There is no one objectively correct 'true' photo of the landscape, there are many true images. A photo does not show us a whole truth. It is not lying in its' representation of the object and does not tell us the full truth of the landscape, much is still hidden. Photography is not the only area of art where this is the case. If we consider the fact that different artists may paint a still life in a different manner, even when using the same subject, we can further see Goodman's argument. Each image of the object can offer us a different way of viewing the object;

"Each different way of painting represents a different way of seeing; each makes its selection, its emphasis; each uses its own vocabulary of conventionalization"¹⁹⁵

¹⁹³ Goodman, N. (1996) "On Starmaking" in *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-Realism, and Irrealism*, Ed. P.J. McCormick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, pp.143-147.

¹⁹⁴ Goodman, N. (1996) "The Way the World is" in *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-Realism, and Irrealism*, Ed. P.J. McCormick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, pp.3-10

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid* p.7

We are quite able to consider art as providing incomplete truths. We talk of artistic movements such as surrealism and impressionism and feel comfortable commenting on the truths that these interpretations reveal,

“We rate pictures quite easily according to their approximate degree of realism... [The] “distorted” photograph... differs from an ordinary “realistic” picture, it reveals new facts and possibilities in visual experience”.¹⁹⁶

The fact that we do not expect whole truths to be found in art is part of the appeal of art. The debate it provokes is partly due to the fact that it may look at objects or landscapes differently. Goodman claims that this example of the “realistic” in art demonstrates that there is no one “true version” of the world;

“The upshot of all this is that we cannot find out much about the way the world is by asking about the best or most faithful or most realistic way of seeing it or picturing it... even the truest description comes nowhere near faithfully reproducing the way the world is”.¹⁹⁷

The fact is that there are many descriptions of the world that are true, just as photos are based on truth, but there are no versions that let us know the full and complete truth about the world.¹⁹⁸ The versions and descriptions are always incomplete at best. This does not mean to say that there is a true version out there that it is impossible to encapsulate as many of our ‘true’ versions are after all in conflict with each other.

“The mystic holds that there is some way the world is and that this way is not captured by any description. For me [Goodman], there is no way that is the way

¹⁹⁶ Ibid p.6-7

¹⁹⁷ Ibid p.8

¹⁹⁸ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds” in *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-Realism, and Irrealism*, Ed. P.J. McCormick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, pp. 61-76.

the world is; and so of course no description can capture it. But there are many ways the world is, and every true description captures one of them".¹⁹⁹

Even though our worlds may be based on 'incomplete' versions, Goodman argues that so long as these are the versions on which we base our beliefs, then they are real to us. The versions of the world that we see are the worlds that we must live in, meaning that our beliefs are likely to be governed by the 'versions' of the truth that we see. A good illustration of this is the topic of the paper 'The Matrix as Metaphysics' by David J. Chalmers.²⁰⁰ He argues that in the film 'The Matrix', Nero's obsession with what is the 'real' world misses out a crucial point. If the false reality that Nero's contemporaries experience is what influences their behaviour and beliefs, if it is the world in and with which they interact, then it is the reality in which they exist and is therefore, the 'true' world in which they live. Likewise, if Descartes is indeed controlled by an evil demon, and all that he experiences as real is an illusion, it is still his world and he can only interact with it if he acts on the assumption that it is real. This reflects Goodman's concept of worldmaking and the fact that our version of the world cannot be the full and absolute truth even though the way in which we interact with these worlds means that we accept these versions as true. Ultimately Goodman argues, however 'incorrect' the world we live in, it is the world in which we live and function. To act as if it were not true would be to not act at all. Like the photo of the landscape, there is no version that shows the full and absolute truth about the world, one must act upon the world as we find it. So long as it is the world in which we live, it is true to us;

¹⁹⁹ Goodman, N. (1996) "The Way the World is", p.10

²⁰⁰ Chalmers, D.J. (2003) *The Matrix as Metaphysics* <http://consc.net/papers/matrix.html>

“For many purposes, right world-descriptions and world-depictions and world perceptions, the ways-the-world-is, or just versions, can be treated as our worlds”²⁰¹

5.2 How ‘worlds’ are made.

Given that Goodman believes that there are different ‘worlds’, the next question is, how are these ‘worlds’ made? If there are many ‘true’ descriptions of the world, how is it that we decide which ‘truths’ we will build worlds out of and how do we assemble these ‘truths’ into our worlds? Goodman offers three possible ways that worlds are made.²⁰² The first and most important point he makes is to say that all of the worlds we construct are made up of other worlds:

“worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking... much ...worldmaking consists of taking apart and putting together”.²⁰³

The many different versions all can be brought together through a process of “composition and decomposition” to create new versions.²⁰⁴ Our beliefs about God for example may be drawn from such worlds as those presented by the Bible, modern science or Renaissance religious painting. Each of these can be said to exist as worlds as they are sources of information or ‘versions’. Furthermore the Bible by itself is a version of the world as is science, however science with a Biblical interpretation would create another version of the world just as the Bible, taken in a scientific light would create

²⁰¹ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds”, p.63

²⁰² Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, Harvester Press, Sussex.

²⁰³ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds”, p.65

²⁰⁴ Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, p.7

another. Just as the photos of the landscape may all show true yet different views, so we can be shown different angles on subjects such as religion. Each of our resources may provide us with a 'true' yet incomplete 'version'. Goodman gives the example of the concept of snow:

“The world of the Eskimo who has not grasped the comprehensive concept of snow differs not only from the world of the Samoan but also from the world of the New Englander who has not grasped the Eskimo’s distinctions.”²⁰⁵

As Goodman points out, this does not mean that each time a world is created that the world is entirely or radically new, just that

“worlds may differ in that not everything belonging to one belongs to the other”.²⁰⁶

There may be many similarities in the Eskimo and New Englander concepts of snow but if there are still differences, this can be said to be a different version. They will see the same object in a different way.

Goodman next claims that how objects are identified plays a crucial role in our worldmaking. In order for anything to be identifiable, Goodman claims, we must have some kind of organisational system which Goodman refers to in his 1978 book *Ways of Worldmaking* as “weighting”.²⁰⁷ If one is to identify an apple, one must have a concept of what an apple is, otherwise one could not recognise it, furthermore, we must have an understanding of how the apple relates to the rest of the world and what its niche is in this world. He argues that symbols are important in world making, that the meaning that comes to be associated with the symbols adds to the complexity of the ‘world’.

²⁰⁵ Ibid, p.9

²⁰⁶ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds”, p.66.

²⁰⁷ Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, p.11.

“Exemplification and expression though running in the opposite direction from denotation – that is, from the symbol to a literal or metaphorical feature of it instead of to something the symbol applies to – are no less symbolic referential functions and instruments of worldmaking”.²⁰⁸

The expressions and the language used to describe objects alter and demonstrate the different versions of these objects. Our descriptions of the world both reflect and shape our versions of the world. How objects are ordered or recognised greatly alters our worlds,

“worlds not differing in entities or emphasis may differ in ordering”.²⁰⁹

The various ways to describe snow may be very unimportant to the Samoan whereas in the world of the Eskimo, it may be a major part of their ‘world’. Even though both ‘versions’ interpret objects in a similar way, the fact that an object has a greater significance in one ‘version’ may well be what separates the two versions and makes them different.

Finally Goodman suggests that worldmaking involves ‘editing’ and alterations,

“That we find what we are prepared to find (what we look for or what forcefully affronts our expectations), and that we are likely to be blind to what neither helps nor hinders our pursuits, are commonplaces of everyday life and amply attested in the psychological laboratory”.²¹⁰

We are not always honest in our portrayals and interpretations; material is often edited incorrectly. Goodman says that when making worlds,

²⁰⁸ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds”, p69.

²⁰⁹ Ibid, p69.

²¹⁰ Ibid, p70

“some changes are reshapings or deformations that may according to point of view be considered either corrections or distortions”.²¹¹

Interpretations of the versions of the world that we see are therefore likely to be influenced by our own prejudices. The world of the Samoan may therefore include an interpretation of snow as being completely irrelevant and unimportant whereas the Eskimo may give it very great prominence. These ‘worlds’ include prejudices that are created through the versions the world is made up from. One version that goes into creating a world may be a strict interpretation of a religious text such as the Bible. In such a case this would be likely to mean that in this version of the world, science is a less reliable or trustworthy source than in a world where the Bible is not a significant influence. Just as the different versions of the world provide different angles on the world, if these versions conflict it can lead to a wrong, biased or incomplete interpretation of one or both versions.²¹²

5.21 Sources of World-making.

Goodman claims that our worlds or ‘versions’ are typically constructed out of previous ones or become new ones through ‘editing’ and alteration.²¹³ This, whilst doubtlessly correct, does not fully explain the ‘sources’ of such worlds: it does not explain, that is, the genesis of the ‘versions’ from which later ones are assembled or what stimulates new adaptations. It is unlikely that Goodman intends us to randomly assemble these worlds or versions without any particular cause or guidance. Goodman rather argues that there are at least logical connections between the different versions of

²¹¹ Ibid, p.72.

²¹² Goodman, N. (1996) “On Rightness of Rendering” in *Starmaking: Realism, Anti-Realism, and Irrealism*, Ed. P.J. McCormick, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Massachusetts, pp.79-104.

²¹³ Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*.

the world that we put together.²¹⁴ The different versions that are brought together are not of totally separate or unrelated objects, they are different versions of the same or related object that come together like the several photos of the same landscape in order to create a clearer image of the object in question. It follows logically from Goodman's discussion of 'worlds' and 'versions' that it is from experience that these original versions are prompted and experience that triggers alterations in these versions. The only way we can access the versions that Goodman speaks of is through experience. Therefore the version of the world that involves detailed description of snow as an important environmental factor has been formed as a result of experience of a world in which snow is highly significant. In saying this it is important to stress that Goodman did not intend for experience to be considered completely separately from our 'versions' of the world. Our responses and interpretations of our experiences are affected by our 'versions' of the world just as our 'versions' are affected by our experiences. Therefore, one's experience of snow may be influenced by our earlier experiences of learning about the science of snow even as the actual experience of seeing and interacting with snow influences our view of the science of snow. There are no simple links to be made here. As versions are influenced by experience and experiences are affected by our versions, a complex and subtle web is built up in order for these 'worlds' to exist.²¹⁵

In order to illustrate how it is that versions of the world occur, I will look at a few sources of worlds, those of science, culture and individual experience and illustrate how these can come together to create an individual's version or versions of the world. Any of these possible 'sources' of the world are in fact versions or made up of several

²¹⁴ Goodman, N. (1996) "The Way the World is", pp.3-10

²¹⁵ Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, see pp.6-12.

versions of the world themselves. One possible example of a source from which we are exposed to a 'version' of the world is science. Science is not only a resource which offers us a particular perspective of the world, it is also a version of the world which is made up of many other separate versions of the world itself, some of these versions conflicting and some complementary. Despite this science is also an example of an 'authority' from which we claim to learn 'truths' and on which we base many of our opinions. The 'truths' we learn through science refer partly to mathematical, empirical truths as well as the more questionable science we are educated in. The mathematical truths that we base our worlds on are facts such as one plus one equals two whereas the more debatable 'truths' refer to ideas or theories that we may have learnt at school or through investigation. Darwin's theory of evolution is an example of one such theory. I have an understanding of Darwin's theory of evolution and I have also been taught neo-Darwinism and although my beliefs about evolution are doubtlessly also linked to culture, I could not hold a belief in evolution unless I have some idea about what evolution is. Science provides many of the 'facts' about the world that we take for granted. Our acquired knowledge of gravity, momentum or pressure influences our beliefs about our worlds by helping us predict and understand how objects interact. An example of this is that I have a belief that if I make an air hole in the top of a cardboard orange juice carton, the juice will flow from the carton smoothly as it allows air to flow in to replace the lost orange juice from the carton. To show how my knowledge of science alters my beliefs about something as simple as an orange juice carton, illustrates part of how I see the world. It is one of the major tools I can use to understand the 'truths' about the world I experience. The scientific theories that I have knowledge of

can provide a way of making sense of the world. I can apply the ideas I learn from science to my experiences of nature or to what I learn from culture and use science to build my beliefs.

Another possible source of 'versions' of the world that we may be exposed to is culture.²¹⁶ The world in which any individual lives will be influenced by that individual's relationship to that world, a factor which is often heavily influenced by the society the individual belongs to and the role within that society that the individual plays. Culture is one of our major influences and is one of the factors that raise the most debate. Unlike science, culture is less likely to present us with 'truths' that we accept as 'facts' such as the concept of momentum or the experience of the seasons. Culture tends more to influence our opinions. It tends to affect our biases, our reactions to experience and or responses.²¹⁷ Our religious beliefs are often linked to culture. If we are raised in a Catholic family in a Catholic country, there is a fairly high chance that we may grow up to have catholic beliefs. Culture is often a deciding factor. The cultural view of nature, the scientific theories accepted by our culture and the general beliefs and morals of our culture all influence our beliefs and our responses to the 'truths' that we learn. Culture can influence us through literature, through television, through interaction with family, friends and the general public. An example of this is the way in which the colour red means different things to different cultures. In China red is the colour of good luck whereas in Britain it means stop or danger. Wedding dresses in India are traditionally red whereas in the Western world red is thought quite an outlandish hue for a wedding

²¹⁶ Is discussed by Goodman in Goodman, N. (1996) "The Way the World is", pp.3-10 but is also a topic discussed in many sociology books such as Bloor (1983) *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, The Macmillan Press Ltd, London and Swindler (1995) "Cultural Power and Social Movements" in *Social Movements and Culture*, Eds. H. Johnston & B. Klandermas, UCL Press, London, pp. 25-40.

²¹⁷ Bloor, D. (1983) *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*.

dress with white being the traditional choice. A woman in a big white dress is likely to bring up very different associations in India therefore than in Britain. In some areas of the USA evolution is not the accepted theory. In very religious areas evolution is taught as one of several theories with the accepted theory being that the earth was created by God in seven days. This does not mean of course that everyone in such areas has the same opinion. Culture may influence us but it is not our only influence. It may also be that culture may for some provide something to rebel against. Growing up in a fairly strict Christian area in North America may in fact cause one to see the church as oppressive and cause one to be more opposed to the Christian church than to another religion of which one has less experience. Just like any version of the world that we are exposed to, culture can be combined with other factors, other versions to make a different kind of 'world'.²¹⁸

Another major philosopher who has talked of the importance of society in terms of individual's beliefs about reality is Wittgenstein. He believed that the social world in which we live and experience shape both our ideas about the world and the logical processes we use to manage these ideas.

"Wittgenstein... treated cognition as something that is social in its very essence. For him, our interactions with one another, and our participation in a social group, were no mere contingencies. They were not the accidental circumstances that attend our knowing; they were constitutive of all that we can ever claim by way of knowledge".²¹⁹

²¹⁸ Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*, see p.7-12.

²¹⁹ Bloor, D. (1983) *Wittgenstein: A Social Theory of Knowledge*, p.2.

He argued that this could be demonstrated by looking at language. He claimed that our worlds are both limited and expanded by the language we learn. Language can never be considered to be complete; it is constantly changing and expanding. The way in which it is used decides the role the word plays in our language-game. Wittgenstein opposed solipsism and believed that in order to understand knowledge we should start by examining society rather than starting with the individual as most philosophers had done.²²⁰ This reflects the view that I am arguing for, the idea that the judgments that we make about the world are limited by ourselves and our social conditions. If language is a social element rather than an individual creation that limits and shapes our world, then there is much that will be interpreted through established uses of words. Wilderness is a good example of this. In order to judge an area as ‘wilderness’ we must have some kind of understanding of what wilderness is and this must therefore entail participation in a linguistic practice. Our view of the area is guided by our language and therefore our society.

When discussing the role of experience in world-making, it is important to note that although we learn much through the experience of science or the experience of culture or many other versions of the world, there are other experiences that cannot rightly be fitted into any of those categories. Goodman claims that rather than on mathematical or scientific facts, worlds are often based on more elusive evidence,

“much more striking is the vast variety of versions and visions in the several sciences, in the works of different painters and writers, and in our perceptions

²²⁰ Ibid

as informed by these, by circumstances, and by our own insights, interests, and past experiences.”²²¹

The scientific version of a blue sky is therefore very different from the artist’s version of the same sky. Furthermore, an ecologist’s version of the world differs from the world of a physicist just as a surrealist’s version of the world differs from an impressionist’s. The different worlds have different relations and therefore angles on how they see things. These worlds are not created on ‘truths’, the scientific version of a blue sky is not better or ‘truer’ than the artistic version; they simply involve different aspects of the truth.²²² With the experience of falling in love we have an example of an experience that can alter our worlds hugely. Our ideas about love may come in part from culture; we read stories of love such as *Romeo and Juliet* or we may get ideas from television programs such as the relationships we see on *Friends* or *Eastenders*. We may read theories on attraction or see examples of creatures that mate for life such as lobsters. All of these experiences are used to shape our own beliefs about love. Whilst there is no substitute for actually falling in love, the ‘knowledge’ that we previously have surrounding the concept of love may well affect how we interpret the experience and how we respond to it. The experience of such an emotion can alter your beliefs about the world completely, not least in that it can cause one to totally reorganise their priorities. It maybe that this kind of experience, along with which versions of the world we are exposed to, gives the individual their unique view of the world and their resulting subjective responses to it.

²²¹ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds”, p. 62

²²² Goodman, N. (1996) “On Rightness of Rendering”.

By looking at nature and some of the possible versions of it, we can see how these sources can be influential. Our views about nature can come from our culture and our culture's relationship with nature as well as science and our personal experience of nature.²²³ Nature is itself a major source of 'truths' for our world-building. It does after all play a crucial role in teaching us about many 'truths' such as seasons, other species and our environments. A classic example of how nature influences the worlds that we build relates to aesthetics. Our experiences of the beautiful in nature may affect how we view art whilst our experiences of the sublime may influence the judgments we make about more extreme environments.²²⁴ If we have had a sublime response to a thunderstorm then our beliefs about thunderstorms will be different from someone who has only ever experienced fear in response to a thunderstorm. Nature teaches us about beauty, about form. It is the cause of much of our experience. The 'truths' we learn through nature can often overlap with the 'truths' we learn through science. My knowledge of pressure is based on a scientific theory but this theory is based on nature. Even if these theories are learnt through books, we can often see the theory in action through nature. My understanding of El Niño may be learnt through books but by seeing natural scenes on the news in an El Niño year such as fires in Australia or excessive rain and landslides in South America, I can see it for myself. The idea that was placed in my head through books can be brought to a full understanding through nature. Nature can also teach us 'truths' that we view as facts. A fear of dogs may be a result of being bitten by a dog whilst sympathy for mice may result from keeping other rodents as pets. The 'truths' we learn about nature make up much of how we see the world. Where science

²²³ This point will be discussed in much more detail in the next chapter but can also be referenced to sources such as Ponting (1991), Thomas (1983), Nash (1982) and Nicolson (1959).

²²⁴ Nicolson, M.H. (1959) *Mountain Gloom and Mountain Glory*, The Norton Library, New York.

gives us theories, nature gives us experience. Our view of nature then, the version of it that we have, is not based on any one factor. It is dependent on several influences, several versions of nature, merging together in order to create a more complex image than any one of the sources could provide alone.

5.3 Relating Goodman to Aesthetics.

Goodman's theory of world-making can be applied to aesthetics in order to explain how it is that individuals form their different responses to the aesthetic appreciation of nature. Goodman claims that the versions of the world that we are exposed to and the resulting "worlds" we live in comprise or constrain the beliefs we have about the world.²²⁵ This means that when we respond aesthetically to nature, the emotional judgments we make about nature are made based on the worlds we live in and the beliefs about the aesthetic object that this world supports. Just as our moral beliefs are shaped by our "worlds", so are our aesthetic responses.

It has never been in any doubt that as far as "traditional" aesthetics is concerned, knowledge of the artist and history of art can affect the aesthetic response. The rise of conceptual art is due to the fact that many artists seek to engage the intellect in the aesthetic response. There is often an intended meaning behind the art that one must seek. If aesthetic 'truths' existed in art to be intuitively revealed, then much of the debate surrounding art would be irrelevant. Artists would not have any need to place such complicated and intricate clues to the meaning within their art. The 'world' of art with its history of art movements and ideas is another example of a world or, rather, a set of worlds. Beliefs and experiences of art greatly shape the aesthetic response to art in the

²²⁵ Goodman, N. (1996) "On Starmaking".

same way that beliefs and experiences of nature influence the aesthetic response to nature. Goodman's theory in fact bears some resemblance to Carlson's theory which suggests that we should be using scientific knowledge of nature to guide the aesthetic response to nature away from inappropriate responses.²²⁶ Carlson's theory is of course much narrower than Goodman's. It is purely science based and relies on the idea that the involvement of 'objective' scientific fact (which of course Goodman would argue was not objective) can result in an objective aesthetic response which one does not imagine would be Goodman's intention. The effect of scientific knowledge on the aesthetic response to nature is a good illustration of how the aesthetic response is relative. If one was aware of the rarity or the special qualities a plant possesses such as the rareness of an eagle or the carnivorous bog species the sundew, one might well see the plant in a different light to someone who has no knowledge of the plant and is not aware it is significant. Learning of these qualities might make one appreciate the object more as it might prompt one to look more closely at the aesthetic object and to appreciate its greater role in nature. The obvious problem that will have to be tackled later is the question of whether it is appropriate to allow for something as idiosyncratic as individual experience to play a role in guiding the aesthetic appreciation of nature. It certainly plays a role, the question is whether or not the resulting responses are appropriate or not. For now it is enough to say that, in the same way in which the opinions and beliefs we hold are reliant on the "worlds" with which we interact, so the aesthetic judgments we make are based on these "worlds" as well.

²²⁶ Carlson, A. (1979) "Appreciation and the Natural Environment".

5.4 Moral scepticism and the argument from relativity.

An illustration or parallel theory that helps to explain the relativity of the aesthetic response is a certain kind of moral scepticism. By comparing moral judgments to aesthetic judgments, one can understand the arguments against the presence of 'aesthetic emotional properties' in aesthetics. Moral scepticism is described by Mackie in *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong* as being the idea that

“there do not exist entities or relations of a certain kind, objective values or requirements, which many people have believed to exist” in regard to moral judgments.²²⁷

In other words there are no properties specific to an action that makes that action objectively 'right' or 'wrong'. A moral judgment that murder is 'wrong' is not just based on an objective property of murder as an action but also on attitudes and feelings such as the individual's knowledge of murder and the situation in which it has occurred. In the same way that one's response to a kitten may vary based on one's experience of kittens, so one's moral beliefs about theft may differ depending on whether one has ever been robbed or been desperate for money before. Moral judgments, like aesthetic judgments are not objective decisions based on objective criteria but rather are relative, explaining the differences of

“moral codes from one society to another and from one period to another, and also the differences in moral beliefs between different groups and classes within a complex community”.²²⁸

²²⁷ Mackie J.L. (1990) *Ethics: Inventing Right and Wrong*, Penguin Books, London.p.17.

²²⁸ Ibid, p.36

Different cultures have different ethical codes and these codes are often based largely on what rules are perceived as necessary to maintain the society as it is. An example of this is the debate over the definition of marriage in the USA. Many of the arguments that George W. Bush uses against homosexual marriage are based on claiming that homosexual marriage undermines heterosexual marriage and that heterosexual marriage must be protected in order to maintain the American society. Both homosexual and heterosexual marriage can be argued either for or against using arguments based on our knowledge of the problems and benefit of each and on logic, however faulty or misinformed this logic or knowledge may be. Our opinion on either homosexual marriage or heterosexual marriage is relative to the kind of society we wish to promote and/or protect and our position in that society. Our beliefs about either morals or aesthetics, our beliefs about the world are shaped not only by our cultures' beliefs and moral codes but also by our relation to this culture and how these codes affect our day to day lives. The way in which we make judgments about the world is relative to our situation in it.

Mackie uses the argument from "queerness" to support his belief that there are no objective moral properties. This argument has two parts, the first being metaphysical and the second being epistemological. Firstly Mackie argues that in order for moral properties to exist, they would have to be unlike any other property,

"entities or qualities or relations of a very strange sort, utterly different from anything else in the universe"²²⁹

and secondly that they would require a type of knowledge which one would acquire in a totally different manner to any other type of knowledge. There are no properties in the

²²⁹ Ibid.p.38

world that are so hard to define or that can be known intuitively rather than for any logical reason. One would have to instantly have an awareness of the presence of the moral property of an action rather than deducing or reasoning that an action was wrong. This is at complete odds to how we usually gather knowledge and make judgments and as Mackie says,

“the suggestion that moral judgments are made or moral problems solved by just sitting down and having an ethical intuition is a travesty of actual moral thinking”.²³⁰

It is an inaccurate account, totally divorced from reality. The idea that we make our moral judgments based on “ethical intuition” seems even more implausible when we consider how we are able to carry on ethical discussions with others and explain and argue for our moral views. If there were moral properties, there would be no argument to be made as logic would not play a role and trying to explain to someone who had not been able to intuitively realise a moral property would be futile. We do not base our moral judgments on ‘just knowing’ rather than logic and therefore our moral beliefs cannot be said to be reliant on moral properties that are intrinsic to certain actions. It makes far more sense to claim that the ethical response to a situation is based on a combination of empirical knowledge, reasoning, and subjective attitude, even though this approach would mean that one could not claim that the moral response is one to an objective property.

The argument against the existence of objective moral properties mirrors that of subjectivity versus objectivity in the aesthetic appreciation of nature due to the fact that both moral judgments and aesthetic judgments can be justified and explained based on

²³⁰ Ibid.p.38

the observer's beliefs and attitudes. The argument that either moral or aesthetic "truths" are known intuitively through the presence of some kind of property would set them apart from any other type of experience or judgment making process. The existence of an objective property that governs what one's response should be does not correspond with how we make either aesthetic judgments or moral judgments. Both responses are actually dependent on the beliefs and information we have about the aesthetic object rather than an 'intrinsic knowing'. Just as moral properties would have to be properties

"utterly different from anything else in the universe",²³¹

so any aesthetic properties of sadness or peacefulness would be an extremely strange type of property. To claim that a meadow possesses the property of peacefulness is bizarre and unlike any other object or property that we can compare it to. We are not instantly aware in many cases of the emotional properties that a landscape or natural object is said to possess, which, if there were aesthetic or emotional properties in nature, we would be. We are not instantly aware of how we feel about aesthetic situations and we are capable of changing our aesthetic judgments which further indicates that our aesthetic judgments are not based on intuition. We argue and debate our aesthetic judgments which would also not be possible if our aesthetic judgments were actually based on intuition rather than logical reasons.

5.5 Relativism and differences of opinion within a culture.

A problem for cultural relativism and moral scepticism is that it suggests that culture is important in governing moral responses even though there is often conflict within a society over moral issues. Within British society there is currently a debate over

²³¹ Ibid.p.38

whether hunting foxes with dogs is ethically permissible. Both sides of the debate have a significant number of supporters, both believing that their view is the one that is most appropriate for our society. Those who support hunting claim that hunting is a traditional way of life that should be preserved whereas those opposed to hunting would argue that fox hunting is no longer necessary and therefore no longer justifiable from a moral standpoint. A critic of relativism would claim that those who share a society should, if relativism is correct in claiming that moral responses are relative to cultures, agree on moral issues that affect the society such as fox hunting. One response to this problem is to claim that there are smaller social groups within a society. In the case of fox hunting this could be claimed to be the countryside versus the cities. It would be easy to stereotype countryside dwellers as traditional types who do not wish to modernise their moral outlook as opposed to the city dwellers that have no interest in our cultural past. The problem is of course that even within these smaller 'cultural groups', there is still variation. Not all those who live in the country support fox hunting any more than all those who live in the cities oppose fox hunting. Culture is one of the many influences in our lives not the sole factor. The relativist view is not simply that our moral views are controlled by culture, but that we are influenced by our culture.²³² Our views are often influenced by the relationship our culture has to the moral issue at hand such as fox hunting, but this does not mean that everyone within that relationship has the same view. Our culture provides us with some but not all the information we use to make ethical judgments.

To demonstrate how moral opinions can be made using a mixture of cultural knowledge and practical knowledge and experience, I will use an example of a moral

²³² Goodman, N. (1996) "The Way the World is".

judgment one could make (regardless of whether it is 'right' or 'wrong') and explain how it could be formed. I am opposed to fox hunting. In making this judgment I have made an ethical judgment based on the knowledge and experience I have available to me regarding this subject. I have information (faulty or true) that the fox population is not reduced by fox hunting and therefore I reject the idea that fox hunting can be justified as pest control. I also have knowledge that tells me that there are more effective ways of controlling the fox population than a mounted hunt with dogs. From reading about the issues involved, I believe that there are methods farmers can take to protect their livestock from foxes that do not involve fox hunting. Based on observation and my knowledge of biology, I have a belief that animals are capable of feeling pain which is based on my knowledge of science and on my experience of animals, and based on my knowledge of ethics I believe that causing an animal unnecessary pain is morally wrong. A common argument for supporting the continuation of fox hunting is that to ban it would cause many to lose their jobs. I believe that this argument is not a strong enough defence of fox hunting as I have knowledge of other immoral professions such as drug dealing, sex trafficking, child pornography and the slave trade which, for me, convince me that morality is more important than employment statistics. I have knowledge of the concept that if one of these professions can be excused on the basis that it provides jobs, then I must accept this as a reason to support any profession that provides jobs. Fox hunting is also supported on the basis that it is a historic pastime and therefore valuable. I have knowledge that tells me that there have been other forms of historic behaviour (for example sexism) which has been changed on the basis that it was incorrect and that therefore, historic practices are sometimes in need of change, that what has historically

been considered acceptable should be rejected. Some of these reasons I have listed are related to culture whereas others are related to my knowledge or experience. My culture has influenced me in my views. I belong to a culture that is capable of questioning some of its practices (such as sexism) and this may have lead me and others to be more critical of traditional ways of life rather than accepting them as a given. These arguments are not of my own invention; rather I have been presented with the arguments both for and against fox hunting by others in our culture and have, based on my general knowledge, made a decision accordingly.

This example demonstrates how it is that I can use cultural, practical and learned beliefs to make my moral judgments. I have, in making this moral judgment, used both beliefs gained from both experience and culture. Even though society can and does play a role in influencing our moral outlook, it is not the sole factor. One bases one's views not only on society but also other types of information and experience that one has gained over time. It could be claimed that this poses a problem for objectivists as it supports the idea that our judgments are based on 'reason' rather than an intrinsic truth hidden within the aesthetic or moral object. In reply to this though, an objectivist could claim that many of our opinions and responses are influenced by culture but that it is possible to transcend such influences in order to find the true correct response. If this were true then it would seem that the aesthetic response need not be subjective as one could account for both the role of culture, attitudes and biases alongside claiming that there is an objective response to the aesthetic object. However, these outside influences often help us have a clearer view of the aesthetic object. There are facts or truths about aesthetic objects that we often learn though sources such as culture. Without culture it is

unlikely that we would know the history or theory surrounding Monet's paintings or know the science behind a cloud. Knowing about objects and their roles can keep our responses accurate. If one must transcend "knowledge" completely, then there is nothing to guide our responses. Even though the information given to us through culture may be faulty, there is some that is correct and which helps us to shape our responses accordingly. By playing down the role of outside influences such as culture, objectivism not only denies what so clearly influences us but also fails to explain how it is that we are able to learn what is right or wrong.

The way in which we make moral judgments shows how we make our aesthetic judgments. Both moral and aesthetic judgments involve judging an action or an object based on our experience and our knowledge of that action or object. The idea that there are 'properties' within the moral act or aesthetic object that define how one should respond to them would mean that aesthetic or moral judgments would be unlike any other judgment that we make. These 'properties' would be unlike any thing else and therefore seem extremely unlikely to exist. If moral judgments are not known through intuition, then it is equally implausible to claim that this would be how we form judgments about aesthetics. Just as our moral opinions may be influenced by our beliefs and experiences of the world, so are our aesthetic opinions.

5.6 Criticisms of Relativism.

One opponent of Goodman's ideas or of 'constructivism' as she describes it is Eileen Crist. One problem raised by Crist is that constructivism – the view that there is

no world independent of our 'versions' of it - as applied to nature is anthropocentric.

Crist argues that the idea that 'knowledge' is

“man-made, not imparted by nature ... embeds the assumption that people operate on an existentially distinct plane vis-à-vis the natural world”.²³³

The bulk of the analysis in relativism is related to the cultural rather than the natural, which Crist claims places a higher value on the cultural. Crist is concerned that by placing significance on culture as an educating force, relativism could be creating a biased dualism between culture and nature. Furthermore, Crist argues that the language used by relativism reinforces this view that culture is superior to nature. By talking about “worldmaking” we imply that we create our realities (such as nature) rather than admitting that nature is found not made. Anthropocentrism has two main problems. First of all, Crist feels that this does not represent an accurate view of the world and how we form our knowledge about that world and secondly supporting an anthropocentric attitude towards the world is not ethically acceptable. Crist argues that as so much of our knowledge is gained from nature, that nature reveals ‘truths’ to us, therefore it is incorrect to assume that the worlds we live in are our own creation. She believes that we are claiming credit for something we have no responsibility for. Crist says that the problem with relativism is that

“the idea of imputing meaning to the natural world presumes a standpoint separate from nature”,²³⁴

it is in other words, dualistic. The world is portrayed as a blank canvas onto which we paint our beliefs about the world, ignoring the ‘truth’ or value of the natural world that

²³³ Crist E. (2004) “Against the Social Construction of Nature and Wilderness”, p.7.

²³⁴ Ibid p.8.

surrounds us. To take the praise for creating the knowledge nature divulges to us is, Crist claims, arrogant and anthropocentric, assuming that humans are superior and responsible for nature. Crist argues that this is damaging for environmentalism as it encourages apathy towards environmental problems. An example Crist gives of where relativism goes too far in claiming views of nature are cultural is the concept of wilderness. It disturbs Crist that wilderness is seen as a cultural construct rather than a phenomenon in its own right. She says,

“there is nothing intellectually or socially innocent about the timing of the disclosure that “wilderness” is a cultural construct: as wild nature sinks into the quicksand of all manner of development, the idea itself starts to feel like gossamer”.²³⁵

Crist argues that the belief that wilderness is a culturally constructed concept is untrue and also concerning as it may encourage a lack of interest in the loss of wilderness. If one believes that there is no such thing as wilderness, if one believes it was only ever an idea suggested by humans, then one will not be much concerned by its destruction.

Crist makes some good points; little of the writing on relativism concentrates on the knowledge we gain from nature and how that shapes our world. It is true that Goodman mostly focuses on culture and how that influences our worldmaking. However I do not believe that relativism is quite the demon Crist makes it out to be. There are two main points to be made in criticising Crist, firstly that many of our ‘versions’ of the world come from nature itself, which is hardly anthropocentric, and secondly, that Goodman’s acknowledgment that we create worlds genuinely illuminates the fact that many of the beliefs that we have about nature *are* in fact created by us rather than from

²³⁵ Ibid, p.20

an honest concept of nature. It brings attention to the fact that our responses to nature are often highly influenced by our views regarding nature meaning that it allows for an attitude towards nature that is self conscious and allows ultimately for an environmental aesthetic that is aware of what kind of irrelevant responses should be avoided. Surely it is better to admit that the beliefs that we hold about the natural world are clouded by our individual prejudices and concerns rather than to pretend that we are able to consistently respond to nature in a way which is objective and completely detached. Relativism does not have to mean that the natural world is redundant, the experiences that we have about it will undoubtedly influence our worlds, however it is also true that our experiences of and responses to nature are influenced by our previous versions of the world. Our worlds are created using a great wealth of knowledge ranging from the books we read, to our experiences of the world to our relationship to the world and its objects. Relativism then, rather than neglecting the role of the natural world, provides a role for it. As Goodman says

“worldmaking as we know it always starts from worlds already on hand; the making is a remaking”,²³⁶

our experiences of the natural world must therefore play a major role in this in that it provides us with many of the versions of the world to which we are exposed. The worlds may be worlds made by us but they have not been created completely randomly with no relation to our experiences. Our experiences of nature must therefore be a major part of how we create worlds.

Furthermore, relativism is a descriptive theory rather than prescriptive. Many of our responses to nature are anthropocentric and a theory that provides a reason for this is

²³⁶ Goodman, N. (1996) “Words, works, worlds”, p.65

therefore actually more useful than one that denies it. Goodman may neglect to concentrate on nature but that does not mean that he believes it irrelevant or created by humans. It may be that he wishes to contrast his view to the more scientific 'realist' approach that neglects the influence of culture so much. Wilderness, or the concept of it that Crist makes so much of, probably is a cultural construct; after all, as Wittgenstein claimed, in order to apply a term such as "wilderness" to an object, one must have some concept of what that term is, the concept must be created. As culture invents language to apply to objects, the decision of what wilderness refers to must have been decided by human practice. Without this practice "wilderness" could just apply to any natural object or area. It is cultural and linguistic practices that has made it specific. In fact, as the concept of wilderness is one that generally excludes human influenced landscapes, then if wilderness was a natural phenomenon rather than a concept, then why is it only humans who are excluded? This seems a little strange. Wilderness as a cultural concept that excludes humans is a notion that makes sense, it allows us to understand what role we have in relation to nature and emphasises how the natural world has changed. Wilderness as a cultural construct is a useful concept for our culture. If we compare the concept of wilderness to the concept of something such as a river the cultural construction of the concept of wilderness is further emphasised.

It is important when considering some of the concepts we have about nature, such as wilderness, to remember that these concepts are not dependent on only one source or influence. One needs to recognise that these concepts are not forced on us by culturally 'innocent' experiences. The version of the world that is presented by our culture is, like any version, made up from other versions of the world. The concept of

wilderness, arguably, is a good example of this. It is an idea that is not only based on the environment in which our culture finds itself, but on other factors such as our culture's relationship and dependence on nature. It is interesting to contrast this concept to a concept of something such as a river which is likely to figure in any culture's 'version' of nature- though perhaps with a few interesting differences depending on the kind of rivers the culture has experience with. Furthermore, it is worth noting that we are talking about the concept of wilderness in a time in which there is no or extremely little 'true wilderness' left.²³⁷ Few of us are ever to see or experience it and yet we all know what it means, it is a term which is commonly understood. We are arguing about the concept of something that does not really exist anymore. If wilderness were not a cultural construct, surely there would be no point in discussing it. In reality the concept of wilderness is one that our society tends to apply to the 'wildest' nature available. It represents an extreme on a scale rather than a definite object: It is indeed, as Crist claims, like gossamer. The fact that our concept of wilderness can alter is further evidence that it is a social invention.

Finally, in reply to the suggestion that relativism encourages apathy towards environmental problems, I would argue that this is no more a problem for relativism than for Crist. She may claim that the lack of emphasis on nature in relativism is anthropocentric but I believe that her argument is anthropomorphic. To imply that there are truths to be found within nature, for nature to "reveal" to us, suggests almost a consciousness to nature; that it is trying to tell us something. Whilst it is true that there is much 'truth' to be found in nature and the knowledge and experience we gain from nature has a huge influence on the worlds we build, there is no intent in nature.

²³⁷ Porteous, J.D. (1996) *Environmental Aesthetics – Ideas, Politics and Planning*, Routledge, London.

Relativism must indeed be careful to place a suitable emphasis on the role of nature in worldmaking but one must also be on guard against inferring too much.

5.7 Conclusion.

Goodman's relativism supports the concept that the aesthetic appreciation of nature is subjective as it means that the individual's responses to the world are dependent not only on what version of the world they are exposed to but also allows for individual and cultural experience of the world to play a role in governing the aesthetic response. In the next chapter I will attempt to illustrate the repercussions relativism has for the aesthetic response by looking at one aesthetic object in particular and examining how culture, a major source of versions of the world, has altered the version of nature over time and the aesthetic responses that occur as a result of this changing version of the world.

Chapter 6 - Changing Social Attitudes towards Nature: An Illustration of Relativity in the Emotional Aesthetic Response to Nature.

This chapter aims to demonstrate using examples that the emotional aesthetic response to nature is relative to one's beliefs about and experience of the aesthetic object and is therefore not in one important sense an objective response. By looking at how Western aesthetic attitudes towards nature have changed over the last few centuries, we can gain a clearer understanding of how it is that our beliefs about nature and therefore our emotional responses to it are shaped.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the emotional aesthetic response is based on our experience of and beliefs about the aesthetic object and therefore is not an objective response. Therefore if one were to respond to a kitten with a feeling of delight, this response could be linked to our perception of the kitten as being innocent, harmless and playful. The response of delight can be justified using logical arguments that would not be available if the aesthetic response of delight was simply an instinctive response to a kitten that has been made without involving reason. This subjectivity allows for different individuals to respond differently to different aesthetic objects. An example of this is that someone allergic to cats may, for their own good reasons, find the kitten significantly less adorable than someone who is not allergic to cats. The absence of 'aesthetic properties' in nature can be confirmed by considering how aesthetic responses to nature have changed according to the changing attitudes towards nature that occur over time and demonstrates that aesthetic responses are not objective responses, not 'right' or 'wrong' reactions. By looking in particular at how Western perceptions

towards nature have changed over the last few hundred years across cultures, one can gain an insight into how it is that we form the opinions we do and demonstrate that these responses or judgments are not instinctive responses to an inherent 'truth' in the aesthetic object.

When, in this discussion of relativity, I use terms such as "knowledge" and "logic", I do not mean that we are using logic to uncover truths about the world. Instead I am referring to the idea that we base our responses on the beliefs we have about the aesthetic object; that our aesthetic judgments are relative to subjective states such as attitudes, preferences and experience. The influence culture has over our aesthetic responses is an interesting illustration of this. There are aesthetic trends in culture, sub-cultures, variations between cultures and changes within a culture that all demonstrate how one's aesthetic response to nature can be affected by our shared experiences and attitudes which permeate a culture. Our reaction to cultural trends can be affected by our situation in that society and therefore our personal preferences about our world.²³⁸ If it were the case that emotional responses to the aesthetic appreciation of nature was a quest for objective truths through the use of reasoning and logic, then these variations within and between cultures would entail that all but one view were false. Instead, a relativist view allows us to understand how it is that we are able to use the beliefs we have about the aesthetic object, such as experience, information (whether true or false), attitudes and preferences, and use a degree of reasoning (however faulty or biased) to form an aesthetic judgment about the aesthetic object.²³⁹ A demonstration of how

²³⁸ Swindler (1995) "Cultural Power and Social Movements" in *Social Movements and Culture*, Eds. H. Johnston & B. Klandermas, UCL Press, London, pp. 25-40.

²³⁹ Goodman, N. (1978) *Ways of Worldmaking*.

culture influences our aesthetic judgments of nature is the way in which western attitudes towards wilderness areas have changed over time. Culture is the primary factor to which our aesthetic judgments are relative as we are all part of a culture and our culture reflects and affects our relationship with our world. Culture also, like individuals, is affected by what threatens it and what does not in how it responds to a situation and in what moral codes it supports.²⁴⁰ Wilderness is also a good demonstration of how aesthetic responses are formed and can change as it is something that has been of much interest lately in environmental circles and is something towards which attitudes have greatly changed and have been recorded.²⁴¹

6.1 Historic Attitudes to Wilderness.

A big problem that needs clarification before one can discuss wilderness in any depth is that it is a term that can be interpreted in many ways and it is not clear exactly what it refers to. A wilderness is generally thought of as an area that is uncultivated, with no or little human influence.²⁴² The problem with this is that there are no clear parameters to the concept and this can lead to two extreme views when one is deciding what a wilderness area is. On one hand, if one were to only consider an area to be wilderness if it was completely free from human influence, then this would ignore the fact that humans are part of nature. However if one allows for the human sphere and the 'natural' sphere to overlap, then a city could be claimed to be a wilderness area as the traffic could be considered as natural as a Redwood tree. There is nothing to guide us in

²⁴⁰ Mackie, J.L. (1990) *Ethics: Inverting Right and Wrong*.

²⁴¹ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

²⁴² The concept of wilderness is summed up nicely by Porteous, "Wilderness is a qualitative term which invokes wild, uncultivated, 'unspoilt' land inhabited by wild creatures, and where humans are merely visitors" Porteous, J.D. (1996) *Environmental Aesthetics – Ideas, Politics and Planning*.

identifying wilderness; nothing to tell us how big such an area must be, how accessible it should be, how 'wild' it should be before one can declare it to truly be a wilderness.²⁴³

A nature reserve could be thought of as a wilderness and yet the fact that it is protected means that it could be considered not completely 'natural'. A possible solution that is put forward by Roderick Nash in his discussion of wilderness in his book *Wilderness and the American Mind* is that we should consider not a fixed concept of wilderness but

“a spectrum of conditions or environments ranging from the purely wild on the one end to the purely civilised on the other – from the primeval to the paved”.²⁴⁴

This would allow us to cease trying to define wilderness as an absolute and instead accept the fact that there are varying degrees of 'wildness'. It enables us to make distinctions that make practical sense. British ancient woodland is not as contrived as a city park or as untouched as Antarctica. A scale helps us to see wilderness as an extreme that some environments may be closer to than others based on their size, their 'naturalness' and their harshness as an environment.²⁴⁵

Wilderness is an environment that has been historically seen as aggressive and dangerous. The Bible clearly depicts wilderness as savage and a cruel alternative to a gentler, more domesticated world such as Eden.²⁴⁶ Eden is an ideal world where the animals are no threat to the humans and the food is bountiful. When Adam and Eve are cast out of Eden, they find themselves in a wilderness as their punishment.²⁴⁷ This harsh environment is meant to be a constant challenge to them, and is hard to survive

²⁴³ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 6.

²⁴⁵ Ibid

²⁴⁶ Porteous, J.D. (1996) *Environmental Aesthetics – Ideas, Politics and Planning*.

²⁴⁷ Nash, R. (1996) 'The Greening of Religion' in *This Sacred Earth*, Ed. R. S. Gottlieb, Routledge, London, pp.194-230.

“To Adam (the Lord said) Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. It will produce thorns and thistles for you, and you will eat the plants of the field. By the sweat of your brow you will eat your food until you return to the ground”.²⁴⁸

Eden was paradise due to fact that humans had full control in Eden meaning that the loss of dominance caused by the fall was that which was our real punishment.²⁴⁹ By regaining control, which occurred after the Flood, we became closer to Eden again and therefore more ‘Godly’.²⁵⁰ Control over the earth is the reward offered for obeying God’s laws. Throughout the Old Testament the wilderness is a place of trial and challenge that must be survived in order that one can reach ‘a land of milk and honey’, a safe haven of plenty. The attitudes towards nature apparent in the Bible are relevant to this discussion as it not only reflects the attitudes and responses of ancient societies, but also because it has been so important in influencing attitudes towards nature throughout history.²⁵¹ Porteous discusses the beliefs regarding nature and wilderness in the Middle Ages and claims that

“Wilderness... was feared because of its genuine dangers, because of its unknowns, symbolic dangers, and also because of its psychological dangers, for wilderness was seen as an outward projection of the animalistic, demonic, dark side of human nature”.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Genesis 3:17-19

²⁴⁹ Thomas, K (1983) *Man and the Environment*, Penguin Books, London.

²⁵⁰ Ibid.

²⁵¹ White, L. (1996) ‘The Historical Roots of our Ecological Crisis’, pp.184-194.

²⁵² Porteous, J.D. (1996) *Environmental Aesthetics – Ideas, Politics and Planning*, p. 54-55

This reflects the concept of dualism that has been so criticized by environmentalists, that there is a divide between humans and nature, culture and the wild, and which, it has been suggested, has its root in Judeo-Christian thought.²⁵³

There has been much literature written blaming Judeo-Christian traditions for the anthropocentric attitudes of the Western world such as the influential paper 'The Historical Roots of Our Ecological Crisis', written by Lynn White. This paper often neglects to mention that the ancient societies that preceded Christianity leant towards anthropocentrism as well.²⁵⁴ It is worth pointing out that the Bible was interpreted in the most anthropocentric light possible which suggests that it is more likely that the society was responsible for the anthropocentric interpretations than necessarily laying all the blame at the door of the Bible. There are many sections of the Bible where references to nature could be interpreted in a variety of ways. A key example of this is the sections which talk about the 'stewardship' role that humans are given by God.²⁵⁵ That the Bible notes that we are the 'stewards' of nature is indisputable, what is up for debate is what is meant by this term. 'Steward' can be interpreted in a number of ways; as controller, caretaker, superior, owner or protector. All would have very different ramifications for the human-nature relationship and the resulting emotional responses one has regarding nature.²⁵⁶

Another argument that has been made regarding the idea that Christianity is responsible for the current environmental crisis is that the introduction of Christianity into the west was largely responsible for the move away from nature-worship and

²⁵³ Nash, R. (1996) 'The Greening of Religion', pp.194-230

²⁵⁴ Thomas, K. (1983) *Man and the Natural World*.

²⁵⁵ Nash, R. (1996) 'The Greening of Religion'.

²⁵⁶ Kinsley, D. (1996) 'Christianity as Ecologically Harmful & Christianity as Ecologically Responsible' in *This Sacred Earth*, Ed. R. S. Gottlieb, Routledge, London; pp.104-124.

paganism.²⁵⁷ The early church wanted to move people away from seeing nature as holy in itself and encouraged its followers to consider nature as a wonderful creation rather than valuable in itself. Part of the reason that the Church objected so much to the worship of nature was that nature-worship was a major part of the pagan religions that the fledgling Christian church had wished to replace. Thomas claims that

“Since Anglo-Saxon times the Christian Church had stood out against the worship of wells and rivers. The pagan divinities of grove, stream and mountain had been expelled, leaving behind them a disenchanted world, to be shaped, moulded and dominated”²⁵⁸

Any step towards reverence towards nature was seen as a step towards paganism and a rejection of Christianity. The Church’s disconnection from nature was therefore not only a result of an anthropocentric interpretation of the Bible (and a rejection of idolatry), but also a necessary step in converting the West to Christianity.²⁵⁹ It is inevitable that the emotional aesthetic responses of an individual who believed nature to be spiritual and therefore in some way sentient rather than a created object will come to view and therefore respond to nature differently. If one believes as a Druid does that an arch of two trees can act as a gateway into another world, one’s emotional aesthetic response is highly likely to reflect thoughts of spirituality or mortality whereas an early Christian would be more likely to respond to the same aesthetic scene with the feeling that the

²⁵⁷ Ibid.

²⁵⁸ Thomas, K. (1983) *Man and the Natural World*, p.22

²⁵⁹ Ibid.

earth and its contents were designed by God, that any arrangement of trees has been designed by God and should be credited to him.²⁶⁰

Keith Thomas writes about historical attitudes towards nature in his book *Man and the Natural World* and mentions several interesting examples of historical recorded comments and beliefs about nature. He found that

“every animal was thus intended to serve some human purpose, if not practical, then moral or aesthetic”.²⁶¹

Andrew Willet claimed in 1605 that God created some animals such as the horse and the ox to be “naturally obedient” whilst in 1643 Jeremiah Burroughes argued that humans’ naturally controlling instinct demonstrated that god had placed humans to be superior to the rest of nature.²⁶² In 1705 George Cheyne decided that God had created horse manure to smell sweeter than other animals’ due to the fact that humans and horses must live and work closely together.²⁶³ This demonstrates the move made to explain the more unfortunate of God’s creations (from a human point of view) by claiming that there is some benefit to them. James Pilkington for example claimed that savage beasts were created to provide humans with the opportunity to be courageous and to prepare men for war whilst the Reverend William Kirby argued that the louse was created to encourage cleanliness.²⁶⁴ These examples illustrate the attitudes many had towards nature and

²⁶⁰ This does not necessarily mean that we should be blaming Christianity for any evidence of anthropocentrism in modern Western society; “As Karl Marx would note, it was not their religion, but the coming of private property and a money economy, which lead Christians to exploit the natural world” (Thomas, 1983, p23). As Thomas argues, the Romans exploited natural resources far more than the medieval Christians that followed them whilst it is also worth noting that ecological neglect or anthropocentric attitudes are by no means particular to the West. Indeed it could be argued that by laying the full blame for anthropocentrism at Christianity’s door we are to some extent sentimentalising and therefore trivialising other religions and/or cultures.

²⁶¹ Thomas, K. (1983) *Man and the Natural World*, p.19

²⁶² Ibid.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Ibid.

which indicate the kind of emotional responses to nature that could be expected. Any beauty found in nature can only be attributed to God. An emotional aesthetic response therefore is likely to reflect an admiration for God's skill or gratefulness for his providence as well as or possibly rather than a feeling of delight arising from the appreciation of the form of the aesthetic object. A belief in the idea that a louse was created to inspire cleanliness is likely to result in an emotional response to the louse that reflects the feeling of superiority and disgust that is implicit in this belief. One can clearly see therefore that the belief that each natural object has a God-given anthropocentric role could greatly influence the emotional aesthetic response of the observer.

Another example of a historic view of nature can be found in Renaissance writer Pico's *On the Dignity of Man* in which he talks of the dominance of 'Man' over nature and the superiority of the intellect and reasoning over nature.²⁶⁵ He describes the creation of the world saying,

"The region above the Heavens He had adorned with Intelligences, the heavenly spheres He had quickened with eternal souls, and the excrementary and filthy parts of the lower world He had filled with a multitude of animals of every kind".²⁶⁶

The view that Pico deems appropriate to hold regarding the world is made clear, that those things earthly and 'natural' are to be considered 'lower' than those that involve the intellect. He follows this by claiming that

²⁶⁵ Pico Della Mirandola, Giovanni (1948) "Oration on the Dignity of Man" Translated by Elizabeth Livermore Forbes in *The Renaissance Philosophy of Man*, Eds. E. Cassirer, P.O. Kristeller & J.H. Randall Jr., The University of Chicago Press, Chicago and London, pp. 223-254.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid*, p.224

“it is not the bark that makes the plant but its senseless and insentient nature; neither is it the hide that makes the beast of burden but its irrational, sensitive soul... nor is it the sundering from body but his spiritual intelligence that makes the angel” ²⁶⁷

These quotes show a view of nature that was common in the Renaissance period (Pico was 15th Century, 1463-1494) and which could be found reflected in their attitudes towards nature and, in turn, their society's relationship with nature. The emphasis on intellect and reason was not only typical of the time but also a likely response to the changes that were going on at the time. In other words, the attitudes that Pico expresses implies a respect for reason over nature which is a reflection of the movement of society towards a more analytical approach that would eventually result in the scientific revolution. Again we would expect to see this attitude reflected in the emotional aesthetic responses to nature. An emphasis on reason is going to result in a certain demotion of the natural sphere. Aesthetically it would be expected that an emphasis would be on art rather than the aesthetics of nature. It is unlikely that Pico would have believed in the aesthetics of nature given his views. If he believed that it was reason above all else that gave value, we cannot have expected him to accept that a flower could possibly be as aesthetically pleasing as a sculpture. This demonstrates how an emotional aesthetic response can be a direct result of one's views on nature. Pico's rejection of all things physical in comparison to the 'heavenly spheres' is not only a product of his historical background and society but also results in an emotional aesthetic response that admires the mental rather than the physical or in other words nature.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, p.226

In order to further demonstrate historic attitudes towards nature which have affected the general aesthetic tendencies of society, it is useful to look at historic beliefs regarding wilderness areas. Wilderness areas are a helpful illustration as they have experienced a clear change in how they are seen over the centuries. It provides us with an excellent example of how emotional aesthetic responses to nature have been effected by the beliefs a society holds about the natural aesthetic object. Deserts are a particular example of a wilderness area that has historically been regarded with hostility.²⁶⁸

Despite the wilderness character of the desert, it has (in comparison to the arctic or some mountains) at least shown some evidence of human habitation. The existence of oases means that it is possible for some human life to survive there regardless of whether that existence is permanent or not. These populations are however either temporary or very small;

“a glance at any world-population map shows that these are “empty quarters” which for long have successfully resisted the human imprint”.²⁶⁹

The settlements are tiny and fragile as the landscape and resources could never support the urban sprawl that dominates most of the inhabitable areas of the globe. Desert has historically been unpopular in most cultures. In Tuan’s paper “Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics”, he discusses the fact that Chinese culture depicted desert in their historic writings as “barbaric” and as representative of

“the conflict between sedentary people and nomads, farm and pasture, and – from the Chinese viewpoint – culture and barbarism”.²⁷⁰

²⁶⁸ Tuan, Y-F. (1993) “Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics” in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal and I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, pp. 139-157.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, p.139

²⁷⁰ Ibid, p.141

For much of history, the extent to which desert areas covered the globe was denied. The Christian Church believed that as God created the earth with us in his image, all of the globe must be logical, perfect and human-centered. The concept of such a large expanse of desert existing did not correspond with this idea, as deserts were considered useless and therefore illogical.²⁷¹ This meant that when new areas of desert were discovered, their size was often underestimated as it was not thought possible that such large expanses of desert could exist. The denial of deserts extended as far as colonial times. In both North America and Australia explorers did their best to either deny the existence of deserts or to claim they were temporary.²⁷² When it became obvious that these desert areas were in fact vast, pioneers in these areas became convinced that through practical measures and perseverance, the desert could be made into productive and hospitable land or that one would find, somewhere in the desert, a river or sea. Settlers were committed to the idea that

“rain follows the plough”²⁷³

and in Australia were convinced that further exploration would reveal that the desert would turn out to hide an inland sea or great river. The truth that there was such a large expanse of barren and desolate land was avoided for as long as possible. The reason for the denial was obvious; the attraction of both North America and Australia was the idea that huge areas of fertile land were there for the taking and the presence of large desert areas was in direct conflict to that.²⁷⁴ These historical attitudes explain why

²⁷¹ Ibid.

²⁷² Ibid.

²⁷³ Ibid, p.141.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

the desert was so often ignored, denied or derided which obviously would have impacted the emotional aesthetic responses that were felt in response to these habitats.

Mountains are another example of a wilderness landscape that has a history of being regarded with distaste or fear by earlier societies. Mountains used to be landscapes that were considered so harsh that few would attempt to visit them and those that did were often there out of necessity rather than any recreational reason. Just as deserts were considered 'immoral' expanses of 'wasted' land, mountains were also considered wastes or mistakes.²⁷⁵ Their apparently useless or uncooperative presence seemed to go against the concept of God's wisdom. The concept that the earth was created in God's infinite wisdom to be used by humans meant that, mountains, like deserts, had no purpose and therefore seemed illogical or a mistake. Even in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth centuries as natural scenes became more popular, it was the pastoral rather than the sublime that generally captured the imagination of the general public.

"To the orthodox seventeenth – and early eighteenth – century imagination, natural scenery was appreciated largely for the extent to which it spoke of agricultural fecundity".²⁷⁶

The emotional aesthetic responses that could therefore be expected would be responses based on a view of nature that prioritised agricultural scenes over wilderness. A 'controlled', domesticated version of nature was preferred. It was not until the end of the eighteenth century that a few people started to venture into the mountains for recreation

²⁷⁵ MacFarlane, R. (2003) *Mountains of the Mind – A History of a Fascination*, Granta Publications, London.

²⁷⁶ *Ibid*, p.14

and it was not until the nineteenth century that the exploits of mountaineers came to interest the general public and aesthetic responses to them started to change.²⁷⁷

Wilderness has a history of being regarded with distaste and fear which has led to there being a historical tendency to not respond to wilderness as aesthetic. The threat that wilderness posed made it unlikely that the observer could detach from personal concerns sufficiently to be able to respond emotionally and aesthetically. There were of course always those few individuals that found the wilderness compelling, such as those more influenced by their love of science than the culture that surrounded them.²⁷⁸ These explorers were few and far between and generally western attitudes towards wilderness areas were quite uniform. The historic view of the wilderness as desolate, dangerous and unappealing, however, is one that has recently started to change.

6.2 Modern Attitudes towards Wilderness.

In the last two centuries Western attitudes towards wilderness have undergone a radical shift, demonstrating that aesthetic attitudes towards nature can change.²⁷⁹ In the desert, once the myths of the powers of the plough and the existence of an inland sea were completely disproved, a “Bush Ethos” was created.²⁸⁰ Nowadays, the desert is considered a wonderful place to visit. It is marketed by tourist agencies as being a unique experience; as somewhere amazing. We no longer only visit the desert when it is absolutely necessary; we now enter it willingly. Mountains, some of the most avoided wilderness areas historically, are now a popular landscape with climbing, walking,

²⁷⁷ Ibid

²⁷⁸ MacFarlane, R. (2003) *Mountains of the Mind – A History of a Fascination*.

²⁷⁹ Tuan, Y-F (1974) *Topophilia – A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values*, Prentice-Hall, New Jersey.

²⁸⁰ Ibid

cycling, skiing and other sports becoming increasingly popular. Mountaineering has become a progressively more fashionable sport over the last three hundred years. Holiday companies offer trips to mountainous regions, the remoteness and ruggedness of the land is now a selling point rather than the deterrent it once was.

“An estimated 10 million Americans go mountaineering annually, and 50 million go hiking. Some 4 million people in Britain consider themselves to be hill-walkers of one stripe or another. Global sales of outdoor products and services are reckoned at \$10 billion annually, and growing”.²⁸¹

From these statistics we can clearly see that attitudes towards mountains have changed from one of animosity to one of definite interest.

“Mountain-worship is given to millions of people. The vertical, the ferocious, the icy – all these are now automatically venerated forms of landscape, images of which permeate an urbanized Western culture increasingly hungry for even second-hand experiences of wildness and wilderness”.²⁸²

Environmental problems are common knowledge and a common concern. Topics such as global warming and the Kyoto Agreement were key topics in the 2005 G8 Summit. The first National Park in the UK, the Peak district, was designated in 1951 and there are now 12 national parks in England and Wales covering 8% of England and 20% of Wales. The Peak District is the most popular with around 22 million day-visits per year.²⁸³ The areas that were once avoided are now “honey-pots” for tourists. We have an increased interest in wild animals. Tourists travel on Safari not to capture and kill large predators as they once did, but simply to watch and admire animals such as lions and

²⁸¹ MacFarlane, R. (2003) *Mountains of the Mind – A History of a Fascination*, p.17.

²⁸² Ibid p.17.

²⁸³ National Statistics: National Parks (2005) http://www.statistics.gov.uk/geography/nat_parks.asp.

elephants. Children are educated about nature in schools and taught to value it. This increase in popularity and interest obviously indicates that emotional aesthetic responses to nature have changed. We have an increased interest in visiting areas of natural beauty and have become far more sentimental regarding nature.²⁸⁴

The difference between historic and modern attitudes towards the aesthetic appreciation of wilderness is clear. Modern attitudes are much more admiring of nature and the wilderness seems to have lost its sting as far as the general public is concerned. ‘Wild’ nature is open for appreciation in a way it hasn’t been before and our emotional aesthetic responses to nature reflect this change, demonstrating that these emotions are in fact relative to cultural and social conditions.

6.3 Reasons for the Changes in Attitude.

The reasons for these changes are intriguing and reveal much about the nature of the aesthetic response. Wilderness was historically associated with such fear that the aesthetic was out of reach. This is a point mentioned by Adorno in his *Aesthetic Theory* where he says that:

“There is no room for natural beauty in periods when nature has an overpowering presence for man, as seems to be the case with peasant populations which are known to be insensitive to the aesthetic qualities of natural scenery because to them nature is merely an immediate object to be acted upon”.²⁸⁵

²⁸⁴ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

²⁸⁵ Adorno, T.W. (1984) *Aesthetic Theory*.

A society that must rely on nature as its main resource will also be mainly motivated by seeing that resource in terms of its practical use rather than in terms of its other values such as the aesthetic. As civilisation became more advanced, it became easier for people to survive and prepare for extreme environments. The wilderness gradually became less of a threat as well as becoming less significant in terms of human survival.²⁸⁶ Humans became less dependent on nature as well as less endangered by it. As transport improved it was possible to travel through the wilderness areas faster and to therefore be able to get help or extra resources when necessary. Other factors such as improvements in medicine or the fact that there was less of a threat from indigenous people meant that it was becoming safer to venture into wilderness areas. They were still dangerous habitats but improved resources and knowledge meant that it was possible for 'stronger' members of society to survive in these more demanding conditions. The fact that few people could survive in these wilderness areas lent them a mythic quality.²⁸⁷ Stories of survival against the odds became more popular and were associated with a macho image. The popularity of cowboy films and the reverence that the 'outback' lifestyle was given was reflective of the change in attitude towards deserts. Another factor that may have played a role is that as modern life became faster paced and busier, the solitude of the wilderness areas became more appealing. Deserts are areas not only with great risk, but also areas with little stimuli.²⁸⁸ In comparison with a city or rural landscape, the conditions for aesthetic experience are in many ways much simpler and allow time for contemplation and thought. This can, for some people, be a relief. It is interesting that our modern appreciation of nature implies a closer relationship with nature even though

²⁸⁶ Ibid.

²⁸⁷ Tuan, Y-F. (1993) "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics".

²⁸⁸ Ibid.

it is actually our distance from nature that enables us to appreciate it more. As society became more distant from the dangers of the wilderness, it was able to sentimentalise both the wilderness and the pioneers that challenged it. As everyday concerns became about jobs and money, families and traffic, the wilderness came to be viewed with nostalgia.²⁸⁹ It seemed to represent a simpler age with simpler concerns. Western culture came to view nature differently than before. When nature had posed the greatest threat to society, it had been demonised, but as other threats and stresses of daily life became more important, society was able to sanctify nature and appreciate it in a more positive light.²⁹⁰

The shift in attitude towards nature shows not only that there can be trends in sentiments towards nature within a culture, but also that these trends are capable of changing. Both of these points demonstrate that the aesthetic response to nature is relative or at least shows that it is very implausible to claim that aesthetic responses are perceptions of objective aesthetic 'properties'. For, if that were true, one should have to argue that previous cultures suffered from a kind of blindness – some failure to perceive what is there to perceive, that they must have ignored the obvious.²⁹¹ If aesthetic responses were objective, then it is difficult to understand how whole cultures can shift their opinions about an aesthetic object or area such as wilderness. Furthermore it shows that there are reasons why cultures hold certain beliefs that are not mere reflections of how the world objectively is. Their beliefs are based on the information they receive about the object (however incorrect) and their relationship to the objects which forms

²⁸⁹ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

²⁹⁰ The idea that the change in society's view regarding wilderness was dependent on a changing relationship comes from Nash (1982) but the idea of the sanctification and demonisation of nature is a reference to the ideas of Eaton and others that will be briefly discussed in chapter 9 in regards to the sentimentalisation of nature.

²⁹¹ Mackie, J.L. (1990) *Ethics: Inverting Right and Wrong*.

further influences such as attitudes and prejudices which in turn form the basis of the emotional aesthetic responses to nature.²⁹²

6.4 Relativity, the Aesthetic and the Sublime.

Part of demonstrating that the aesthetic response is not objective is to show that it is possible to explain why an individual responds to an aesthetic experience in the way that they do without postulating objective properties. The aim is therefore, to show that the shift in western society's emotional aesthetic response to wilderness is due to the change in western society's relationship with nature. If an argument can be made that shows that our response to wilderness areas is relative to our relationship with wilderness, it would support the claim that the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are indeed relative and that the previous analysis of emotions in the aesthetic of nature is correct. One possible reason for the change in the aesthetic response to wilderness in western society is that our reduced dependence on nature has enabled us to experience a sublime aesthetic response to wilderness. Kant's aesthetic theory placed much emphasis on the sublime and claimed that such a response could only be felt in response to either nature or architecture. The sublime occurred when one was able to be distance oneself from personal interest and delight in the majesty of a natural scene. Kant believed that the sublime could only occur in nature where one was confronted with the full power of nature. He talked of a feeling of awe, of the ability to look beyond one's own fear in order to appreciate a truly dramatic and amazing view. Examples that Kant gave of this included such experiences as a thunderstorm or of a waterfall. They are experiences that involve a feeling of one's place in the world, of feeling small and

²⁹² Goodman, N. (1976) *Languages of Art*.

insignificant. In emotional terms this means that one could expect an emotional response that reflected a feeling of perhaps mortality or perhaps comfort at being part of something larger. Kant believed that the pleasure one takes in the sublime is due to a sense of oneself as a rational being capable of overcoming one's fear to appreciate the aesthetic object, such as a thunderstorm. One of the possible by-products of the changing attitude of the West towards nature is that it may be more likely that one might have a sublime aesthetic experience in response to nature. It is conceivable that as we become more distant from nature, we are more able to be 'disinterested' in it. Deserts would fit in with Kant's concept of the sublime; they are a landscape with a dramatic beauty that can overwhelm us and endanger us at the same time. If we can "disinterest" ourselves in the risk the desert poses, we can rejoice in a landscape that is truly beyond our control. This attitude is only truly possible if one is not reliant on the desert for our survival. In our modern world there is escape from the desert if we need it and this enables us to detach ourselves from the practical dangers of the desert and consider it from a more aesthetic angle.²⁹³ Critics of this would argue that the interest in the desert is no modern phenomenon and that the desert has always been regarded as an area for contemplation; the Bible speaks of Jesus going out into the desert to be tempted by the devil and for meditation.²⁹⁴ This still, however shows the influence of the culture of the time and the fact that there were not the resources to make existence in the desert practical. The reason that the desert was thought to be a place of contemplation, of religious testing was because of the fact that it was an extreme environment which could bring one close to death and remove one completely from every day life thereby

²⁹³ Tuan, Y-F. (1993) "Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics".

²⁹⁴ Matt 4:1 "Then Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil".

bringing one closer to God. The desert was not treated with disrespect. It was considered more of a holy place rather than a land for practical gain or general life. Similarly it could be claimed that the affection for mountains has arisen from the fact that mountain climbing is not as dangerous as it was and that the increasing popularity of mountains is simply due to the fact that it is now possible to visit mountains safely.²⁹⁵

This is quite an interesting discussion as although some aspects of mountains have become safer, they are still dangerous habitats. One does not go on a skiing holiday considering oneself to be undertaking a trip of great danger and possible valour and yet one does run a risk of a broken bone. Avalanches are, so long as one does not venture off-piste, not too much of a concern, especially as most resorts take measures to avoid them. Mountain climbing is probably the most dangerous of activities associated with mountains and as the equipment available to climbers has improved, this has obviously improved the safety of climbing as a past time, leading some to argue that this is responsible for the popularity of climbing.²⁹⁶ However, even with the improvements in safety, climbing can still be an extremely dangerous sport that claims many lives each year, leading one to wonder why one would wish to place oneself in such a dangerous position. It could be suggested that there may be an ethos with mountain climbing, like the culture of the Wild West, a macho ethic that seems to play a role in people's actions. Climbers are not interested in simply climbing or conquering a peak, it does not seem to count unless a certain level of difficulty was involved. Experienced climbers may often re-climb a peak with less safety measures, an action that makes no logical sense from an aesthetic point of view. The fact that mountaineering is so popular despite its dangers

²⁹⁵ MacFarlane, R. (2003) *Mountains of the Mind – A History of a Fascination*.

²⁹⁶ Ibid.

suggests that there are some personalities that crave a certain amount of danger or challenge in their lives. The tendency to continuously try to make mountaineering as difficult as possible supports this idea. In some ways this response to nature is still one of trying to control or at least conquer nature. Like the wilderness in the Wild West that it was thought needed to be conquered and made to be subservient to humans, the need to conquer mountains could be an attempt to be superior to nature. Mountains are a wilderness, one of the few remaining in the world, and for a personality drawn to a need to conquer nature, this could be a subconscious attempt to overcome it. The point really is that in order for the individual to respond to an environment as sublime, an element of fear is necessary whilst at the same time this fear should not be overwhelming. For the experience to be sublime we must be made to feel insignificant or at least, not in complete control of our environment yet not terrified to the point at which the response ceases to be aesthetic. With the changes and advancements that have been made in mountaineering and in the equipment available to mountaineers, this middle ground that allows the sublime response has evolved in response to mountains. The increased accessibility and safety of mountains or other wilderness areas has resulted in a decrease of fear in response to mountains so that one can now find the middle ground between fear and detachment that Kant believed we must have if we are to respond to an aesthetic object or area as sublime. This increased ability to respond to mountains as sublime as a result of changing attitudes towards nature (in turn a result of society's increased resources in dealing with wilderness) is evidence of the direct connection between a society's relationship with nature and its emotional aesthetic responses to nature.

One of the points that was raised by Tuan in his discussion of attitudes towards arctic or desolate areas (which have much in common with mountainous areas) is the fascination that many explorers seemed to have with death which may affect their aesthetic responses. There is such a high risk of death when exploring these extreme landscapes that it is impossible for any of the explorers not to consider the idea that the landscape could kill them.²⁹⁷ For most people, regardless of culture, this would deter them from attempting to climb the mountains or crossing the desert, or at least to ruin the aesthetic experience for them. However, for some people this closeness to death seems to hold a kind of fascination and can actually enhance the aesthetic experience, creating a sublime experience. As Tuan says,

“confronted by the immensity and power of desert and ice, one cannot simply stand to the side and evaluate as though one were standing before a landscape garden... Explorers of desert and ice may be said to be half in love with piercing beauty and half in love with death”²⁹⁸

It could be that the link between death and aesthetics has always played a role in our responses to extreme environments. It would explain why the desert was thought of as a place for meditation and trial in Biblical times, why the ‘Wild West’ held such mythic power in the last two centuries and why we as a modern culture are interested in the attempts to climb Everest, cross the Antarctic or sail around the world. It may be that these extreme environments which were once the last natural frontier are able to bring us closer to understanding the true last frontier; that of death. Maybe our need to conquer these more violent areas of nature is a reaction to our inability to conquer death. If we

²⁹⁷ Tuan, Y-F. (1993) “Desert and Ice: Ambivalent Aesthetics”.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p.155.

can learn to survive in deserts and mountains, maybe we believe that we can come to survive death. This preoccupation with death may actually be the reason that these individuals are able to enjoy these extreme environments so much. In terms of an emotional aesthetic response to nature they might feel exhilaration not only at being part of such a wild and beautiful landscape but also as a result of feeling that one's life is at risk. Kant based much of his aesthetic theory on the idea that one must be disinterested in an object before one can appreciate it aesthetically. In order to have a sublime aesthetic response to the arctic, one must be able to overcome one's fear of death. The sublime experience is, as Kant sees it, about the triumph of the mental over the physical, the ability for rationality to overcome an instinctive fear. The sublime is a description of a reaction rather than a property belonging to the aesthetic object. The point at which one individual is able to put aside their fear and appreciate a landscape aesthetically maybe very different from the point at which another individual is able to respond aesthetically. One individual may find the experience of skydiving to lead to a sublime experience whereas another individual may be so petrified by the experience that they are totally prevented from appreciating their surroundings aesthetically. For many of us the risk of death is too frightening to be able to truly enjoy activities that might result in our death, but for those who are "in love with death", it maybe that this merely enhances the aesthetic experience. This is in fact another example of how it is that some individuals have such different aesthetic responses to nature. It is not just our culture that helps form our responses. Our other experiences and responses influence our emotional aesthetic response as well.

By looking at historical attitudes towards nature and comparing them to modern attitudes in Western society, we can see that aesthetic responses to 'wild' nature have changed and that therefore, the emotions felt in the aesthetic response would also have changed. Not only have whole societies changed their attitudes towards nature but it is clear that there are individuals within those societies that have their own different responses as well. There are those who would still rather not go themselves to the mountains and others who love nothing better than to experience those landscapes for themselves. With the changing relationship between nature and humans, it is possible that the range of possible aesthetic responses has increased as our responses to nature became less about survival and more about appreciation.

6.5 Wilderness and North America: An Illustration of Relativism in the Perception of Wilderness.

North America provides us with an excellent example of a society which has experienced a dramatic change in emotional aesthetic responses to wilderness in accordance to its changing relationship with nature and further demonstrates the relativity model that has been argued for previously. When North America was originally discovered by the West, it was expected to be a new Eden, a type of paradise with an easy harvest and plenty of resources. In comparison to the overcrowded cities of Europe, it was thought to be a pastoral haven, wide open spaces and plenty of opportunity for success. However, those arriving in America with all their expectations of finding a rural paradise were quickly disappointed to find a wilderness instead.²⁹⁹ The land was hard to farm and the pioneers were faced with hurricanes, earthquakes and

²⁹⁹ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

wild animals. As previously discussed, wilderness was considered to be a terrible thing. It was considered hideous and the spread of civilisation was generally thought of as a good influence that brought order to the chaos.³⁰⁰ For the pioneers this attitude was in part due to the fact that to survive they were pitted against nature. For the pioneers to have the basic necessities such as food, water and shelter, they had to compete with the wild animals and survive the dangers of the wilderness. Their relationship to nature was far away from the modern relationship we have with nature now.

“For the first Americans, as for medieval Europeans, the forests darkness hid savage men, wild beasts, and still stranger creatures of the imagination... The pioneer, in short, lived too close to wilderness for appreciation”.³⁰¹

If one is competing with nature it becomes, obviously, much harder and less appropriate to distance oneself from nature and admire it. Kant argued that in order for one to have an aesthetic response to nature as beautiful, that response must be disinterested. Without the response being disinterested, one could not guarantee that the response was either relevant or appropriate. The reliance that the pioneers had on nature and the danger it presented to them, would have meant that it would have been nearly impossible for most to detach from their daily challenges in order to appreciate their surroundings aesthetically. In contrast with the European origins of many of the pioneers, North America was full of unknowns; wild animals in far greater numbers than Europe, Indians, not to mention the fact that by the very nature of being pioneers they were often in areas about which they knew very little of what to expect with fewer resources to help them cope with what ever they came across. The wilderness was full of threats,

³⁰⁰ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

³⁰¹ Ibid, p.24

particularly as far as the religious pioneers were concerned. The wilderness, or living so close to it, was thought to be seductive.³⁰² The fear was that, as the Bible spoke of the wilderness as being a place of such evil, too close association to this wilderness might tempt one to give in to the evil, to that the pioneers might become uncivilised and wild themselves.³⁰³

“A more subtle terror than Indians or animals was the opportunity the freedom of wilderness presented for men to behave in a strange or bestial manner.

Immigrants to the New World certainly sought release from oppressive European laws and traditions, yet the complete license of the wilderness was an overdose.

Morality and social order seemed to stop at the edge of the clearing”³⁰⁴

Many of our moral values are developed in order to preserve the current society.³⁰⁵

Wilderness was considered immoral as it threatened the religious and strict society of the time. There were many pioneers that did join the Indians and there are stories of pioneers in more desperate situations who were reduced to cannibalism.³⁰⁶ In order to combat this, many pioneers clung closely to religion and created a greater distance between ‘civilised’ humans and ‘wild’ nature. The distance had to be maintained if civilisation was to survive in such a harsh climate.³⁰⁷

The change in attitudes towards wilderness came near the end of the Eighteenth century when cities started to be regarded in much the same way as the wilderness once

³⁰² Ibid.

³⁰³ Although this point was mostly taken from Nash (1982), it is also discussed in Porteous, J.D. (1996) *Environmental Aesthetics – Ideas, Politics and Planning*.

³⁰⁴ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*, p.29

³⁰⁵ Mackie, J.L. (1990) *Ethics: Inverting Right and Wrong*.

³⁰⁶ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

³⁰⁷ Ibid.

was.³⁰⁸ As the cities of America became bigger, more built up and as crime rose, the wilderness came to be seen as something less threatening. The cities came to be associated with poverty, crime and a 'dog-eat-dog' mentality. The competition for work and resources meant that cities were no longer the safe haven they were; they were no longer thought to completely embody civilisation and respectability.³⁰⁹ Humans have always tended to demonise the habitat which poses the greatest danger. This opinion of cities as wild and corrupt was held in particular by Thomas Jefferson. In December 1789 Jefferson commented to James Madison that

“our governments will remain virtuous for many centuries; as long as there shall be vacant lands in any part of America. When they get piled upon one another in large cities, as in Europe, they will become as corrupt as in Europe”.

Jefferson apparently believed these fears to be realised when in 1803 he said,

“The general desire of men to live by their heads rather than their hands, and the strong allurements of great cities to those who have any turn for dissipation, threaten to make them here, as in Europe, the sinks of voluntary misery”.

As the cities became more violent, the dangers of the wilderness were being reduced. The dangers of conflict with Native Americans was reduced, the numbers of wild animals was falling and pioneers were learning more and more about how to survive in this 'New World'. Around the 1890's, American society started to realise that the pioneering way of life which had been so revered was actually dependant on the existence of wilderness.³¹⁰ This all led to the start of a new respect for wilderness or, as Roderick Nash refers to it, “The Wilderness Cult”. In a change from the concept that

³⁰⁸ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

³⁰⁹ Ibid.

³¹⁰ Ibid.

wilderness was immoral and could bring out the 'evil' primitive in humans, wilderness started to be associated with mental strength and moral integrity.

“Living in the wilderness, “the return to primitive conditions,” fostered individualism, independence, and confidence in the common man that encouraged self-government.”³¹¹

This change in how wilderness was perceived reflected the changes in society at the time. As American society became more 'civilised', so the pioneer past of society became more and more respected. Humans have always wanted to escape whatever was troubling them at the time. When wilderness was the biggest threat, towns and cities took on a mystique of being safe, civilised, comfortable, warm worlds, free from the rigors of frontier life. As the towns and cities began to take over the country and worries of crime and unemployment became more important, wilderness was seen as an escape from the stresses of modern life and as a freer existence. The 1890's were seen as the end of the Wild West. There was no frontier left to fight. It became feared by leading members of society, not least by President Roosevelt, that this end to pioneer life would mean a softer, more cowardly way of life.³¹²

In the late Nineteenth century wilderness appreciation societies started springing up around the states. In 1876 the Appalachian Mountain Club was started followed by the creation of hugely influential Sierra Club in 1892 and The Campfire Club of America in 1897.³¹³ These societies not only reflected the increasing “cult of the wilderness” but also became extremely important in raising the consciousness of the American general public and increasing sympathy towards wilderness. An example of

³¹¹ Ibid, p.146.

³¹² Ibid.

³¹³ Ibid.

the changing attitude towards wilderness in North America at this time as discussed by Nash was the case of Hetch Hetchy. Following the earthquake of 1906, water shortage was becoming an increasing problem for the city of San Francisco. In order to solve this problem, it was suggested that the Hetch Hetchy Valley in the Sierra could be made into a reservoir.³¹⁴ The creation of the reservoir would not only provide ample water for the city, but also the dam its self would create the possibility of generating hydroelectric power. As the only appropriate area for a reservoir, Hetch Hetchy seemed the answer to San Francisco's water problems. What the reservoirs' supporters had not accounted for was the opposition to flooding such an area. Hetch Hetchy was a reportedly beautiful area which was much loved by wilderness lovers and furthermore was in 1890 made a wilderness preserve by virtue of being in Yosemite National Park. Up to this point there had been no or little actual protection of wilderness where human needs conflicted with nature, love of wilderness always came second. As the plans to flood Hetch Hetchy became more public, so opposition against the dam grew. Wilderness clubs such as The Sierra Club campaigned against it and wilderness writers such as John Muir spoke against it and lobbied politicians. Considering the fact the water was desperately needed by San Francisco as well as the fact that there was not a precedent of concern for the protection of wilderness, there was a surprising amount of opposition by the general public,

“One hundred or even fifty years earlier a similar proposal to dam a wilderness river would not have occasioned the slightest ripple of public protest”³¹⁵

³¹⁴ Nash, R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*.

³¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 181.

Even though the dam was eventually built after several years of impassioned debate, the incident demonstrated that the American public was ready to start considering wilderness to have value not only for its resources but also for its aesthetic or spiritual properties or maybe even for its own intrinsic value. The dam may have been built but its construction was hotly debated and only finally agreed to after all alternatives had been explored and its necessity proven. America had never felt the need to justify its 'civilisation' in this way before, as Nash says,

“most Americans had not felt compelled to rationalize the conquest of wild country in this manner. For three centuries they had chosen civilisation without any hesitation. By 1913 they were no longer so sure”.³¹⁶

The relationship between Americans and their environment had changed vastly since the pioneers had first arrived. The change in how Americans were affected by their environment altered how they felt towards it. Their decision to protect their wilderness and to appreciate it was, certainly in part, due to the fact that it was no longer necessary to destroy the wilderness in order to survive; wilderness was no longer human's greatest competitor.³¹⁷

This example illustrates how one can use a variety of different situations and information to make aesthetic judgments. The emotional aesthetic responses to nature went through a major period of change as a direct result of the changing relationship between American society and wilderness. None of the changes that took place such as the increased interest in nature and the rise of environmental groups such as the Sierra club would have taken place without an increased emotional attachment to nature which

³¹⁶ Ibid, p181.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

in turn occurred as a direct result of the changing circumstances concerning the environment and wilderness areas. Although the changing attitude towards wilderness in North America is a good illustration of the way the relationship between nature and humans has affected human attitudes towards nature, it is by no means alone. The responses of most cultures towards nature are dependent on their relationship with nature and emotions are intrinsically part of this process.

6.6 Conclusion.

The example of the changing attitudes towards wilderness illustrates how it is that culture is one of the influences on the aesthetic response to nature as well as showing how it is that emotional aesthetic responses are relative to the circumstances and beliefs surrounding them. The changes in attitude towards wilderness areas, demonstrates that aesthetic attitudes cannot, in the sense explained at the beginning of this chapter, be objective. If emotional aesthetic judgments were objective, intuitive responses, it would not be possible for them to change so drastically from individual to individual and across time and cultures and still make sense. Furthermore, the fact that one can explain how it is that these attitudes have changed in terms that do not appeal to facts about nature itself, illustrates that these attitudes are not objective. They are based on the beliefs we have about the aesthetic object and our attitudes and prejudices towards them which enables us not only to change our opinions but also to explain why it is that our opinions have changed. Regardless of whether these beliefs are correct or not, whether they are biased or unfair, they are still the basis on which we make aesthetic judgments. In terms of nature, the extent to which our society is dependent on

nature is highly indicative of how we will respond aesthetically to nature. The greater risk nature poses to us, the greater threat we will consider it and the more likely we are to respond emotionally in a manner that reflects this relationship with nature. This seems an obvious point to make; it is completely logical to fear the thing that is our greatest danger. However this further proves the point that our aesthetic responses are, like our moral responses, based on “logic”. It was logical for the pioneers to fear wilderness just as it is reasonable for modern society to consider wilderness an escape from modern life, it is all relevant to our relationship to wilderness. The subjective nature of the aesthetic response means that our emotional aesthetic response can be argued for in terms of “reason” and in terms of culture.

Chapter 7 - Can Emotional Aesthetic Responses to Nature ever be Considered Inappropriate?

In this chapter I intend to consider the relative character of the emotional aesthetic appreciation of nature in respect to one of the main problems currently being debated in reference to the aesthetics of nature, that of inappropriate responses. I will argue that despite taking as I am a subjective, or at least partly subjective approach, it will still be possible to claim that inappropriate emotional responses to nature can occur. I will then go on to argue that inappropriate responses are a significant problem which will then lead me into my next chapter where I will discuss the various approaches that others have taken in order to prevent such responses. Despite the fact that the focus of aesthetics has historically been art, the aesthetics of nature has in recent years become subject to increasing interest. As part of this interest, philosophers have looked at not only the differences between art and nature but also the consequences of these differences.³¹⁸ As previously discussed, the most significant difference between the aesthetic appreciation of art and the aesthetic appreciation of nature is that there is no artist in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and therefore no corresponding guidance as to what should and what should not be considered relevant.³¹⁹ The presence of intent in art means that there is often a concept behind art to be found. As nature is not created with intent there is not the guidance for the observer in the aesthetic appreciation of nature that there is in the aesthetic appreciation of art. In art we are presented with a

³¹⁸ Saito, Y. (2004) "Appreciating Nature on Its Own Terms" in *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*, Eds. A. Carlson & A. Berleant, Broadview Press, Toronto, pp. 141-155

³¹⁹ Carlson, A. (1993) "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature" in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal and I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 199-227.

certain viewpoint within a frame.³²⁰ Not only is our attention directed to one particular area or item, it is guarded against distractions. Furthermore, the presence of so much art theory and art history can also assist us in our responses.³²¹ There is much in the aesthetic appreciation of art to keep the aesthetic gaze relevant and appropriate. In nature there is not the same recorded history or theory of appreciation. One cannot read what critics have said about a landscape or their discussions on its meanings in the way that one can with the ‘Mona Lisa’. There are no boundaries to tell us what we should be looking at, nothing to stop one from being distracted or even to tell us whether it is wrong to be distracted. We, the observers, are on our own. Hepburn claims in his paper ‘Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature’ (Hepburn, 1998), that this lack of guidance in the aesthetic appreciation of nature can often result in the aesthetic response being inappropriate or ‘trivial’;

“In the case of art, we are better equipped to sift the trivial from the serious appreciation; for the existence of a corpus, and a continuing practice, of criticism (and philosophical study) of the arts – for all their internal disputations – furnishes us with relevant criteria. In the case of nature, we have far less guidance”.³²²

This is a point that has been historically associated with the aesthetic appreciation of nature with Adorno³²³ in particular having cited it as well as more recent philosophers such as Budd making such comments as

“there are no constraints imposed on (the) manner of appreciating (in nature)”.³²⁴

³²⁰ Carroll, N. (1993) “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History”.

³²¹ Graham, G. (2000) *Philosophy of the Arts – An Introduction to Aesthetics*. 2nd Ed., Routledge, London.

³²² Hepburn, R.W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”, p.65.

³²³ Ibid

Trivial responses, I propose, are where we find the aesthetic response to be based on inappropriate beliefs about an aesthetic object that lead to a response that is not in keeping with the objects qualities. An example of an inappropriate response is if on being confronted by a hungry lion, one focused purely on the 'fluffiness' of the lion. Obviously this is an extreme example but it demonstrates that there are some responses to an aesthetic object that may be inappropriate to the object or to the situation. Emotional aesthetic responses to nature must therefore be considered in light of this problem. If it is found that emotional aesthetic responses are completely subjective then there can be no trivial responses as any response is acceptable whilst on the other hand, if we are to claim that emotional responses can be trivial, we must consider firstly if this is a significant problem and secondly, if it is, how we are to prevent trivial or inappropriate responses.

7.1 Can the Aesthetic Response to Nature Ever be Considered Inappropriate?

I have argued that emotional responses to the aesthetic appreciation of nature are subjective, relative responses that are based on our assumptions about the aesthetic object and the world which we both inhabit. The fact that these responses are subjective might seem to imply that emotions arising from the aesthetic appreciation of nature are never trivial or inappropriate. If our responses are relative to the versions of the world that we are exposed to, then these responses are simply reflections of these versions and cannot therefore be called 'wrong' anymore than our version of the world can be. It is merely evidence of a different perspective on the world. The relativist view is that there

³²⁴ Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*, p.147.

are no versions of the world that are wrong, they only present different angles.³²⁵ If we are to believe therefore, that emotional responses towards the aesthetic appreciation of nature are relative, then this might be taken to imply that Hepburn's concern over the trivial and serious in nature was unnecessary. If one has been exposed to a version of the world that supports the idea that roses are connected to romance, it would not be surprising if the resulting emotional response to a rose is relative to this association. Furthermore, if one cannot claim that this version of the world is wrong, how can we criticize the resulting response? If one cannot claim the emotions we feel in response to nature are ever wrong or mistaken then they can never be inappropriate and there need be no discussion of how best to manage or inhibit the aesthetic response so that it does not lead to irrelevant or incorrect responses.

Although it may appear on first glance that a subjective theory of emotion must mean that one can never claim that an emotional aesthetic response is trivial and that any emotional response is both possible and acceptable, if our response is relative, the version of the world on which it may be based may have false elements. This means that even though one is not criticising the fact that the basis of the response is a version of the world or the fact that this version may not be a complete 'truth', one can still acknowledge that the incomplete character of this version may well result in a response to an aesthetic object that may not be completely appropriate to the object. If the aesthetic response is relative to our beliefs about the world, then it is quite likely that sometimes the beliefs on which we base these responses are based on incorrect, biased or incomplete information. A possible illustration of an incomplete version is if one were to respond to a wolf based purely on a version of the world that focused on the

³²⁵ Goodman, N. (1996) "The Way the World is".

decreasing population numbers of the wolf as well as the historical ecological significance of the wolf. According to this version of the world, the wolf is a very important animal whose extinction from the UK must be considered a loss. Given this version of the world, one could expect an emotional aesthetic response which is appreciative of the wolf's hunting prowess and which regrets its absence from the UK. Whilst this world would for the most part be based on truth and have some value, the aesthetic response that results from it could be said to be inappropriate as it has not involved a version of the world that recognises how dangerous the wolf is and how it must have been a serious problem for British communities for much of history. Although there is much to be admired about the wolf's abilities as a hunter, it is inappropriate to consider the wolf only in this light and to neglect the fact that the wolf was a feared killer. The point here is that both a version of the world that portrays wolves as purely vicious animals and a version of the world that portrays wolves as majestic, powerful and missed creatures are incomplete versions that would both result in sentimental responses rather than a serious appreciation of the wolf. This shows how it is that even though we may have an appropriate version of the world, it may present an incomplete picture of the aesthetic object which may lead to an emotional aesthetic response which is not appropriate to the object. Claiming that aesthetic responses to nature may be inappropriate does not mean that there are aesthetic 'truths' to be found in nature that lead to our aesthetic responses to be 'wrong' or 'right'. It means instead that our response may vary depending on our perceived experiences of the aesthetic object and that if these perceptions are based on biased or insufficient versions of the world, then the resulting emotional responses are 'inappropriate' rather than completely

‘wrong’ or ‘false’. They may simply be lacking in substance or could be improved by experience of other versions of the world than the one has been aware of. An appropriate response, likewise, is not to be equated with being ‘true’. It merely means that the response is based on attitudes that are realistic and relevant to the aesthetic object; it is an informed response rather than a response that is based on irrelevant or random assumptions. With a false version it may be that we have based our beliefs about the world on information that comes from a disreputable source or which greatly conflicts with another version of the world. With a biased version of the world it may be that the version of the world on which we have based our beliefs about the world is biased towards a certain viewpoint. This can quite often be the case with culture. A cultural response to nature is likely to be biased towards the protection and interests of that culture.³²⁶ The example of the wolf, for example can be used to demonstrate this. A culture such as ours that no longer has to deal with the problems that a wolf population can cause, is more likely to emphasise the value of the wolf than a population that must struggle to control the wolf population and which treats the wolf as a major predator. The aesthetic responses then of an individual to whom the wolf is an actual threat and the individual to whom the wolf is not will be completely different based on their different experiences of the wolf, meaning that whilst both their reactions are subjective, they may not necessary be appropriate to the aesthetic object. If therefore, it is possible to claim that emotional aesthetic responses may be wrong, incomplete or biased, then it is clearly possible to claim that such responses are inappropriate or ‘trivial’.

³²⁶ O’Neill, J. (1993) *Ecology, Policy and Politics – Human Well-being and the Natural World*, Routledge, London.

7.2 How Do Trivial Responses Occur?

Hepburn argues that there are two main components to the aesthetic response to nature and that these two factors can clarify how it is that the aesthetic response may become trivial.³²⁷ The first of these components is the sensuous component. This focuses on the sensory impact of the aesthetic experience. It involves the appreciation of form, of colour, of smell and feel, of what we absorb from the aesthetic object itself. The second component is the thought component and refers to the thoughts we have regarding the aesthetic object. This would include factors such as memories of similar experiences, associations we have with the aesthetic object, imagination and emotions. It is the thought component that enables us to have the more engaged responses to nature such as those to Kant's sublime or when an aesthetic experience helps us to realise things about ourselves or the world.³²⁸ It is a main problem for those who try to apply art theory to the aesthetic appreciation of nature that art theory does not allow for such responses as those we have to the sublime. The freedom of the aesthetic response to nature, the fact that it is, as Berleant claims, so much more engaged than the aesthetic response to art is one of the factors that makes the aesthetic appreciation of nature so valuable and comes from this thought-component.³²⁹ The open character of the aesthetic response to nature gives us many benefits and is worth appreciating in itself; The aesthetic response is hugely valuable:

“the life enhancing” effect of beauty, release from stress and anxiety of practical, manipulatory, causally engaged relations with nature into the calmly

³²⁷ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”

³²⁸ Mainly taken from Hepburn, R.W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature” but a similar point is made in Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

³²⁹ Berleant, A. (1993) “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature”.

contemplative ... with a lasting, or always renewable, sense of mystery or wonder that it should be there at all".³³⁰

The thought-component is not only the aspect of the aesthetic response that makes aesthetics and aesthetic responses so interesting; it is also the part of the aesthetic response which lends itself to inappropriateness. It is the unspoken assumptions we have about the aesthetic object that can be false, inappropriate or incomplete. In other words, all of the factors that make the thought-component so interesting and intricate, imagination, memories, association, are the factors that are most likely to lead us astray.³³¹ It could be argued that one should simply reject the thought-component completely in order to simplify the matter; however this would mean losing out on the complexity and engaged character of the aesthetic response to nature. Hepburn therefore wishes to criticize the trivial character of many aesthetic responses to nature without rejecting the thought-component involved.³³²

If then, we look at how the aesthetic response to nature tends towards the trivial, we can see by breaking down the aesthetic response how inappropriate emotional aesthetic responses to nature can occur. The sensuous or perceptive component can be trivial if the perception is inaccurate.³³³ We often do not notice all the relevant details of an object. From a distance objects can look different, a quick, inattentive glance can reveal an object that is completely different from if one examines the object closely. The reflective component on the other hand can be just as inaccurate. As I discussed in relation to Goodman, the associations we make between objects are not necessarily

³³⁰ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", p.68.

³³¹ Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.56, No.2, pp. 139-147.

³³² Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" .

³³³ Ibid

based on ‘truth’.³³⁴ There are often prejudices in our attitudes regarding an object as well as the point that one’s views on an object are very much dependent on their experience of the object. We tend to judge our surroundings by our relationships to them. This is a point of view supported by Wittgenstein in his comments on pictures in *Philosophical Investigations*. He gives the example of a picture in a text book which shows what resembles three sides of a cube. He then suggests that this picture could be accompanied by a text box that could claim that the illustration showed a cube, a wire frame or three boards leaning against each other. The point is that the information we receive via the text box heavily influences how we judge the picture. We do not judge the ‘cube’ simply on appearance;

“we can also see the illustration now as one thing now as another.- So we interpret it, and see it as we interpret it”.³³⁵

Although the image does not change, other factors such as knowing what the picture is intended to show can cause us to see the picture again, to start perception again. He further demonstrates this point by using the example of a picture that can be seen as a drawing of a duck and yet at another moment be seen as a picture of a rabbit. When we come to realise the second way of seeing the picture, we do not, Wittgenstein claims, use the same language as we would upon viewing a picture of a fork. We claim to see the second image of the duck-rabbit as a new way of seeing rather than a belief that the picture is what it appears to portray whereas with the picture of the fork, we believe it to be a picture of a fork. Wittgenstein’s view is that our judgments of pictures (and therefore our responses to them) are based not only on a simply perception, on what is

³³⁴ Goodman, N. (1976) *Languages of Art*.

³³⁵ Wittgenstein, L. (1976) *Philosophical Investigations* – translated by G.E.M. Anscombe, Basil Blackwell, Oxford, p.193.

present in the picture but also any relating factors. This is an argument he also discusses in his 'Lectures on Aesthetics' where he argues that social factors are one such relating factor that can heavily influence how we interpret a picture:

"In his (Wittgenstein's) view, a visual resemblance of a certain socially or conventionally determined sort is both necessary and sufficient for a two dimensional surface to be a picture".³³⁶

An artist therefore, may respond to a landscape by attempting to mentally 'frame' the landscape, to imagine it as a painting, whereas a geologist might consider how the landscape had been shaped. Whilst this example is obviously a simplification of how the thought component of the aesthetic appreciation of nature works, it demonstrates how it is that the thought component is based on our 'knowledge' and beliefs, which may or may not be appropriate. The reason that inaccurate perception components or thought components trivialise the aesthetic response to nature is that they present an inaccurate, one-sided or shallow view of nature. If our aesthetic response is based on inaccuracies, the resulting response cannot be taken as a serious assessment or response to nature. In such situations where the response is based on incomplete information or associations, it could be argued that the observer has not really responded to nature but instead to fiction, an imagined aesthetic object.³³⁷ One could only consider the aesthetic response as 'trivial' as it is not based on a serious consideration of the aesthetic object. We can therefore see how inappropriate or 'trivial' responses can occur as a result of deficiencies in either the perception-component or the thought component.

³³⁶ Novitz, D. (2004) "Rules, Creativity and Pictures: Wittgenstein's Lectures on Aesthetics" in *Wittgenstein, Aesthetics and Philosophy*, Eds. P.B. Lewis, Ashgate Publishing Ltd, Hants, p.64.

³³⁷ Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol.56, No.2, pp. 149-155.

Hepburn points out that when we refer to the ‘depth’ of the thought component, we should not imply that this necessarily equates to a deeper, more ‘serious’ aesthetic response.³³⁸ Just because we have considered the associations or relevant imagining that relate to the aesthetic object in more detail does not mean that the aesthetic response is ‘better’. An aesthetic response based on response to beauty alone (so long as it is not based on irrelevant or inappropriate associations or imaginings) can be just as serious as a response that is based on a complex set of associations and in depth ‘knowledge’. In fact there may well be far less to go wrong in the simpler responses as after all the more factors we involve, the more likely it is that one of them is inaccurate. It may be that the more complex the response, the more likely it is to involve trivial elements. There is, therefore, no correlation between the complexity of the thought component and the seriousness of the aesthetic response.

7.3 Why are Trivial Responses a Problem?

Having established what trivial responses to nature are and how they can occur, the next question becomes; are these trivial emotional responses to nature a problem? What effects do they have on the aesthetic response and on our attitudes towards nature? We need to know whether inappropriate emotional responses to nature are an acceptable consequence of involving the thought-component in the aesthetic response.

One aspect of trivial emotional responses to nature is that they may be superficial responses.³³⁹ As in the aesthetic appreciation of nature there is no artist to guide the boundaries of what should be involved in the aesthetic view, the perspective

³³⁸ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”.

³³⁹ Ibid.

and viewpoint are decided by the observer.³⁴⁰ This can lead to misperception or inattention to detail. If we were to admire a tree, with nothing and no one to guide us, we may observe it without paying proper attention to details such as the shape of the leaves or the curve of the branches. If we deny that there are trivial responses to nature we cannot say that the aesthetic response can ever be 'wrong' or 'lazy'. This means that the aesthetic response may come to include responses that are superficial and do not appreciate the full depth and quality of the aesthetic object.

“On a superficial reading of nature, objects tend to have an invariable, univocal expressive quality”³⁴¹

They may be lacking in substance and detail. It could be argued that basing an aesthetic response on a 'lazy' or inattentive observation of the aesthetic object is not necessarily a terrible thing. It may lead to a simpler, more basic response that is not necessarily worse than a more complex response that is based on a deeper understanding of the aesthetic object. The problem that such a claim as this ignores is that missing out on important details of an aesthetic object could lead the observer to misinterpret the aesthetic object. By having a reduced, superficial view of the aesthetic object, we may end up making associations with the aesthetic object that are wrong. If one were to see a beech tree and admire it without paying proper attention, one could mistake it for an oak tree. This may seem harmless but if one were to then appreciate the tree in the light of the associations one has concerning oak trees and folklore, it could lead to an assumption that the tree has a different cultural meaning than it actually has. Accepting inappropriate responses

³⁴⁰ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature".

³⁴¹ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", p.69.

as an unimportant part of the aesthetic response to nature means that one cannot criticise those responses to nature that are based on a superficial observation of nature.

Another problem that can result from trivial responses to nature is that they can result in the aesthetic experience becoming detached.³⁴² If we are to have no limits to what we may consider in relation to the aesthetic object, the aesthetic view is free to wander as far from the aesthetic object as it likes. By not having any standards to what one can consider 'relevant', the aesthetic response can become totally detached from the aesthetic object. With no boundaries or rules to guide the aesthetic consideration of nature, there is nothing holding us close to nature.

"Even when we discard the excesses of anthropomorphism, to admit no more than this other-respecting concern is to exclude too much. The human inner life has been nourished by images from the natural world...Not all of this can be categorized as strictly aesthetic encounter or aesthetic contemplation: some of it can, and the lines of connection are obvious and important"³⁴³

The aesthetic perception may wander wherever it pleases. Bearing in mind the dualistic, anthropocentric tendencies of our culture, it would be unsurprising if the aesthetic view tended not to acknowledge the true involvement and relationship between humans and nature.³⁴⁴ It is easy to be swept along by our cultures' tendency to separate ourselves from nature, to think of ourselves as 'outside' nature. Forgetting to allow for the fact that humans are part of nature can result in a dishonest or trivial response to the

³⁴² Ibid.

³⁴³ Ibid, p.71.

³⁴⁴ Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

environment.³⁴⁵ By being detached from nature we become unable to experience the aesthetic aspects of nature that exist as a result of our relationship with nature. If one is unable to feel a connection with nature, then the aesthetic experience of an aesthetic event such as a thunderstorm might well lose its aspect of the sublime that Kant argued for. Without an ability to feel involved in nature, there would be no feeling of awe at a thunderstorm, no feeling of insignificance or smallness that can come with realising one's place in the world. A detached response to nature is often a reduced or at least unrealistic response to nature.

One major problem that is connected to inappropriateness in the aesthetic response to nature is sentimentalism.³⁴⁶ There are three types of sentimentalism, the first of which is the anthropomorphisation of nature. This refers to the tendency of the observer to project human attributes onto nature. By doing this we are indulging in an inappropriate version of the world which cannot therefore lead to an appropriate emotional aesthetic response to nature. Examples of this kind of sentimentalisation is present in many books and films which tell the stories of animals to which are attributed human hopes, fears and emotions. Such sentimentalisation in our media and arts can lead to such sentimental responses as are currently being made in response to Luc Jacquet's documentary 'March of the Penguins' which was translated by Jordan Roberts from French to English.³⁴⁷ The film follows the breeding season of the Emperor Penguin which has evolved in order to cope with an extreme environment and has been taken by some individuals such as Michael Medvel (a popular right-wing Christian radio host)

³⁴⁵ Berleant, A. (1993) "The Aesthetics of Art and Nature", in *Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts*, Eds. S. Kemal and I. Gaskell, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, pp. 228-243

³⁴⁶ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

³⁴⁷ Ibid.

³⁴⁷ Warner Brothers Inc (2005) *March of the Penguins*, <http://wip.warnerbros.com/marchofthepenguins/>

and Maggie Gallagher (campaigner against gay marriage) to be representative of the family values held by some of the more traditional areas of society. Andrew Sullivan's 'Sunday Times' article quotes Medvel as arguing that 'March of the Penguins' is

"the motion picture this summer that most passionately affirms traditional norms like monogamy, sacrifice and child rearing"³⁴⁸

whilst Gallagher claims that

"it is hard not to see the theological overtones in the movie [Roberts] remade.

Beauty, goodness, love and devotion are all part of nature, built into the DNA of the universe. Even in the harshest place on Earth... love will not only endure, it will triumph".³⁴⁹

The problem with such judgments of nature is that, at least in this case, they are based on a complete misunderstanding of the aesthetic object. The basis for the sentimental responses to the penguins is the belief that the penguins travel to the breeding grounds, mate for life and that the male penguins care as a community for the eggs and young whilst the females travel to a warmer climate and that the mates are finally reunited when the females return.³⁵⁰ This paints a picture of a loving penguin partnership that is part of a supportive community whose main goal is the caring rearing of the young. It is certainly a very comforting image. Unfortunately it does not reveal the full facts. Whilst it is true that the mating pairs will tend to be monogamous for the season (partly because the females are away for much of that season) only 15% of the penguin "couples" remain together for two seasons running. For 85% of penguins, "love

³⁴⁸ Sullivan, A. (2005) *Andrew Sullivan: Not-so-picky penguins muddy the morality war* <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/article/0,,2092-1785196,00.html>

³⁴⁹ Gallagher, M. (2005) *A Hollywood Miracle: Penguins have no Agenda*, <http://www.vexpress.com/m,aggiegallagher/?vc-full-date=20050823>

³⁵⁰ Warner Brothers Inc (2005) *March of the Penguins*, <http://wip.warnerbros.com/marchofthepenguins/>

and devotion” only lasts for a year at a time. By making such judgments about the penguins, one projects onto them a sense of society and moral beliefs that they do not have and which ignores the reasons for how nature and the penguins have evolved to be as they are.

By attributing human feelings, experiences and morals to nature, the observer is responding to an imagined, false view of nature which comes as a direct result of neglecting the actual qualities of nature that deserve to be admired.³⁵¹ It is based on human intentions and experiences rather than a response to nature and is therefore a trivialised, inappropriate response to nature. The sentimental way in which these individuals have responded to nature demonstrates how it can be harmful for meanings to be projected onto nature. The comments of a radio host and a journalist may seem unimportant but ‘March of the Penguins’ was a very popular film with box office numbers making it the second most popular documentary to be shown.³⁵² The responses therefore of journalists reflects how many (although obviously not all) members of our society may respond in their aesthetic appreciation of the penguins. Within their areas these individuals are highly influential and their responses cannot be ignored. Our media reflects our society just as our society can be influenced by our media.³⁵³ If this is the case then it is likely that there is much of our society that will come to view penguins as representing love and traditional family life when this is firstly based on a misunderstanding of the life cycle of the penguin and secondly, it leads us to respond emotionally to an aesthetic object based on a false ‘value’ rather than its own merits. By

³⁵¹ Eaton, M.M. (1998) “Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”.

³⁵² Warner Brothers Inc (2005) *March of the Penguins*.

³⁵³ Murphy, P.D. (1995) “The Whole Wide World Was Scrubbed Clean - The Androcentric Animation of Denatured Disney”, in *From Mouse to Mermaid*, Eds. E. Bell, L. Haas & L. Sells, Indianapolis, Indiana University Press, pp. 125-136.

assuming that animals respond emotionally in a similar way to humans and that they have 'goals' which are similar to our own, we are responding to nature in a shallow, trivial way which has no or little relevance to the actual animal and its value.

The second type of sentimentalism occurs when one's response is based on a humanized view of nature. This is similar to the anthropomorphism of nature but rather than projecting human emotions and feelings onto nature, this concerns looking at nature from a purely humanised perspective with human interests.³⁵⁴ By focusing on human prerogatives, one's attention can be drawn to aspects of the aesthetic object that appeal mainly to these aims thereby having a ulterior motive in the aesthetic experience, leading to a disconnected and therefore trivial response. Due to the absence of any guidance in the aesthetic response to nature, it is easy for the aesthetic focus to be distracted by any aspects of the aesthetic object that are connected to a human angle or which can be interpreted purely from a humanized angle. If we return to the Penguin documentary it is possible to see that such examples are not only evidence of anthropomorphism, but also are a result of looking at nature through a human tinted lens. Rather than admiring a creature such as a penguin for the qualities it possesses, having a humanized view of the penguin and its society can cause us to interpret what we see in light of our relationship towards the penguin and in terms of how we would like it to represent an ideal human society. In terms of emotion this could mean that one does not only attribute human emotions to nature as in anthropomorphism but also that one responds with a sentimentalism that is inappropriate. The response of finding a fluffy kitten 'cute' or 'adorable', if responding purely out of human interest rather than appreciating the aesthetic qualities of the kitten as their own would be an illustration of

³⁵⁴ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

this humanised view of nature. Responding to nature on human terms rather than based on the qualities belonging to and present in the aesthetic natural object is sentimental and leads to inappropriate and trivial responses to nature.

The third manner in which one can sentimentalise nature is by either the sanctifying or demonising of nature.³⁵⁵ This is particularly common in fiction and film and is often a result of anthropocentric attitudes that exist in our culture. As discussed in the previous chapter, wilderness is an example of a natural environment that has been historically demonised before being sanctified by our modern, Western society. An example that supports this view is of the wolf as an animal that has been demonised. The wolf is historically one of the most dangerous predators of Western society and much of our historic literature reflects this fact. Many fairytales such as 'Little Red Riding Hood' or 'The Three Little Pigs' have a wolf as the aggressor of the piece and rather than show the wolf as a wild animal whose main concerns are hunger and survival, the wolf's behaviour is demonised to be evil and cunning. This clearly involves not only an anthropomorphising of the wolf, but also a negative, demonising of the wolf's 'personality'. In reality there is nothing 'evil' about the wolf needing to feed itself. It is no more the villain than a human who wishes to slaughter a pig for food. By demonising the wolf, we are filtering the facts about the wolf and therefore not responding in an appropriate manner. The sentimentalisation of nature is dependent on false images of nature which cannot result in serious or meaningful interpretations or result in serious or meaningful emotional aesthetic responses. A similar example can be used to demonstrate the sanctification of nature. One producer of films that both reflect

³⁵⁵ Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

and influence our society is the Disney company whose cartoons tend towards the sentimentalisation of nature. Disney may seem a frivolous example of a cultural trend but it is also a major company that is responsible not only for many of our modern 'fairytale' but also for providing a view of nature for many of the younger generation. Furthermore in 1995 a "Memorandum of Understanding" between The Public Land Managing Agencies of the United States Federal Government and The Disney Corporation made Disney the 'environmental mouthpiece' of the US government³⁵⁶, meaning that Disney is endorsed by the American government to provide environmental education and influence cultural environmental views. Disney is a hugely powerful and diverse company which produces some of the most popular children's films made. In terms of video sales, Disney has produced the four highest selling videos with the most popular, 'The Lion King', selling over 26 million copies³⁵⁷ whilst 'Finding Nemo' recently made \$37 million at the cinema.³⁵⁸ Disney stories are clearly seen by many children and therefore cannot be disregarded in terms of social influence. Disney has a tendency to avoid such unpleasant aspects of nature as predation or hunting. An example of this can be found in the popular children's film 'Finding Nemo' which featured sharks who had decided that meat means murder and attempt to become vegetarian. Whilst this may be an entertaining premise, it is completely sentimental. This is not just because it attributes human characteristics and emotions onto the sharks, but because it presupposes some kind of ethical system in the wild. It implies a demonisation of the necessary eating habits of wild carnivores. In Disney the heroes of the story are never

³⁵⁶ Disney Defines Nature (2002) <http://www.wildwilderness.org/docs/disney.htm> , USA, Bend

³⁵⁷ Washington Free Press: Disney (2005) www.washingtonfreepress.org/17/Disney.html

³⁵⁸ Dale, D. (2004) *Nemo tops DVD sales*

<http://www.smh.com.au/articles/2004/02/26/1077676901985.html?from=storyrhs>

shown as the aggressors. Heroes such as those in 'The Lion King' who are carnivores are rarely shown to hunt, such activity is usually saved for the villains such as Shere Khan in 'The Jungle Book'. It demonises natural predation, teaching children that carnivorous, predatory creatures are 'evil' rather than simply hungry. Disney removes from nature the natural competition between species and gives the sentimental impression that nature is harmonious and peaceful.

"All inner conflicts about the nature of the land were ...resolved in Disney's other films: he always, and only, showed us a clean land. Indeed, the whole wide world was scrubbed clean when we saw it through his eyes".³⁵⁹

Such sentimentalisation is harmful as it can influence cultural perceptions of nature that encourage inappropriate aesthetic responses in the individual.³⁶⁰

The aesthetic approach to nature not only lends itself to trivial responses in its tendency towards inattentive or inaccurate perception and biased, inaccurate or incomplete thought components but, it is sometimes argued, by placing too much emphasis on whether one's aesthetic response is serious.³⁶¹ By focussing too much on the thought components of the aesthetic response, we can become too aware of our position as the observer and can, as a result, become detached from nature. One problem that often arises when discussing humans and nature is a dualism which concentrates on cognitive ability as the difference between humans and nature. By placing so much emphasis on the mental, we are further emphasising the distance between humans and nature and are disconnecting ourselves. Due to the connection between subjectivism and

³⁵⁹ Snickle, R. (1968) *The Disney Version: The Life, Times, Art and Commerce of Walt Disney*, Simon and Schuster, New York, p.53.

³⁶⁰ Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

³⁶¹ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

the sentimentalisation of nature, there is an increased chance of one coming to hold false beliefs about the aesthetic object. Critics of subjectivism claim that if we do not admit that there are 'aesthetic truths' to be found in nature, we are ignoring the inherent value that belongs to nature. Therefore, by holding that a rose is symbolic of romance, we end up focusing on the symbolism of the rose and emotions associated with that symbolism such as affection rather than delighting in the beauty and form of the rose. By doing this the objectivist claims, we are devaluing the rose and thereby leaving its status open to abuse. By allowing for variation in how one responds aesthetically to a natural object, we are allowing for variation in how seriously one takes nature. The counterargument to this problem is that humans are of course part of nature and the aesthetic appreciation of nature can often help us realise this. An aesthetic response to nature can often occur as a result of feeling at one with nature or by realising our insignificance in the universe such as in a sublime response. If one is too focused on responding 'correctly', one may well become too absorbed in the thought component of the response and may lose both the perspective and the benefit that an engagement in nature gives us. This can be avoided if we can focus on the fact that we are part of nature;

"If it trivialises to see nature in terms of ready-made, standard "views", so does it also to see oneself merely as the detached viewer ... there is a deepening of seriousness when I realise that I am one with ... nature".³⁶²

The advantage of our involvement with nature and the resulting aesthetic experiences mean that the aesthetic response can increase not only our awareness of nature but our respect for and involvement in it. It allows for a level of "self exploration" that is not

³⁶² Ibid.

possible with a detached, trivial response. By remembering that we are part of nature we can keep the aesthetic response from becoming too pretentious and detached.

7.4 Conclusion

By examining trivial responses we can see that they can occur in the emotional aesthetic response to nature and furthermore that this can be an advantage. If every aesthetic approach were acceptable, then none of the problems caused by trivial responses could be acknowledged as problems. One problem that arises from accepting a subjective description of the aesthetic response to nature is that it can detract from the aesthetic object's aesthetic value.³⁶³ Furthermore, it means that we cannot use aesthetic value as a reason to protect nature as one cannot claim that a natural aesthetic object has an objective aesthetic value worth protecting. If the aesthetic value of nature is subjective then an aesthetic object that is hugely valuable to one individual could be meaningless to the next. One cannot use the subjective aesthetic value of a natural object to keep it from being damaged, destroyed or polluted. This is in fact a reason used by many philosophers to support the view that the aesthetic appreciation of nature is objective. It also raises the question of whether a replica of a natural aesthetic object would have the same 'value' as the original. If this is the case then it has huge repercussions for the environmental movement as it would mean that an argument could be made for destroying a natural habitat if a 'copy' could be created elsewhere.³⁶⁴ By accepting that there are responses that can be considered inappropriate, we are able to claim that such cavalier approaches to nature as those who believe it to be replaceable

³⁶³ Carlson, A. (1993) "Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature".

³⁶⁴ Elliot, R. (1982) *Faking Nature*. Inquiry Vol.25 pp81-93

can be criticised even if we cannot claim that each natural object has an intrinsic aesthetic value. We can argue against those whose aesthetic responses we disagree with and those that we consider harmful. Being able to admit that the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are sometimes inappropriate allows us to have some standards in the aesthetic response.

By looking at how and why trivial emotional aesthetic responses to nature occur we can see that real problems can arise from such responses. Inappropriate responses to nature are harmful enough that a strategy is needed in order to combat them. They cannot just be accepted as an inevitable consequence of a subjectivist emotional aesthetic theory. Though such a strategy will not stop trivial responses from occurring, they will allow us to criticise them and to argue that those who respond with sentimental or otherwise inappropriate emotions to nature could have avoided the problem. The next chapter will therefore go on to examine the various ideas proposed by others in order to prevent trivial responses and to then propose my own ideas for holding the emotional aesthetic response to nature to account.

Chapter 8 - Preventing Trivial Responses in the Emotional Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature.

It can be seen from the previous chapter that some emotional responses to nature can be criticised as inappropriate or trivial in relation to the aesthetic object. It is therefore necessary to find a way of being able to prevent inappropriate responses or to provide the criteria for identifying what characterises an appropriate response so that one can reject or criticise the trivial responses. Due to the lack of an artist in nature and the resulting freedom of the aesthetic response to nature, the problem of inappropriate responses and how to prevent them is one that has been much discussed. It is therefore necessary to start by examining the various solutions that have been offered to solve the problem of inappropriate aesthetic responses to nature before I offer my own emotion orientated solution which will undoubtedly draw on some of the ideas used by my predecessors. The philosophers that I will be looking at in particular are Brady, Eaton, Carlson, Hepburn and Carroll although all of their ideas hark back to and indeed are often based on the theories regarding how it is that one appreciates nature that I discussed several chapters ago. I will then go on to propose my own solution to the problem before attempting to anticipate possible objections that others might raise with my theory.

8.1 Hepburn.

The first theory I shall look at is that of Hepburn's as proposed in his paper 'Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature'.³⁶⁵ He is in particular critical of those approaches that assume that so long as nature is appreciated on its "own terms" it will be a serious response. He claims that the aesthetic response to nature is made up from two components, the thought component and the sensuous component and that therefore, any theory that attempts to prescribe how one responds appropriately to nature must deal with the problem in terms of these components. He claims that the problems associated with the sensuous component is that it has a tendency towards the inattentive, that it can be "lively or lazy"³⁶⁶ whereas the problem with the thought component is that it may be biased or based on incomplete versions of the aesthetic object. These are aspects that were looked at in the last chapter but are still relevant here in that they illustrate what aspects it is that are in need of regulation. Hepburn, at this point in his paper adds that he is not necessarily going to argue that the more detached we are from nature, the deeper the experience. He wants to say instead that as we are part of nature, a completely detached observer is no more 'serious' in their attitudes towards nature than an observer who is unable to step back from nature at all. He will not be arguing that the 'deeper' the thought component, the more serious the aesthetic response.

Hepburn next claims that a problematic duality arises in the aesthetic appreciation of nature due to the assumption that a serious aesthetic response to nature is equivalent to a serious regard for nature. This implies that the aesthetic response should be focused on nature which conflicts with the point that if we only consider nature and

³⁶⁵ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) "Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

³⁶⁶ Ibid, p.68.

avoid all human related thoughts, then we forget how the natural world affects humans. It therefore appears that in order to avoid trivial responses in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, we should be concentrating on appreciating nature on its own terms. This though, of course, comes with its own problems. The first of these problems that Hepburn identifies is that one must somehow have respect for nature even though it shows none for its own members. If we are to accept the premise that we should be appreciating nature on its own terms, it would appear that the aesthetic experience of watching a cat stalking a bird would be serious if it were to concentrate on the stealth of the cat, to delight in its form and in the grace of its movements. The problem with this is the issue of how the action of the cat killing the bird affects the aesthetic qualities of both the cat and the bird. If we are to appreciate nature on its own terms then we presumably should be admiring the cat's hunting skill. However what about the appreciation of the bird which is clearly ruined by the fact it has been killed, or the problem that the aesthetic 'object', the cat, has shown no respect for the aesthetic value of the bird. How do we reconcile the two aspects of the cat; the aesthetically pleasing hunter, and the killer? Hepburn argues that the answer to this dilemma is to find "equilibrium" between our respect for the aesthetic object (such as the cat) and our respect for nature. In many ways, the idea of appreciating nature on its own terms would appear to imply such equilibrium anyway. To appreciate nature on its own terms means to admire nature whilst accepting it as it is which must surely include those aspects of nature that are less palatable such as its tendency towards violence and disrespect for its other members. In order to truly appreciate nature on its own terms we should be able to appreciate both its "creative and destructive" forces.³⁶⁷

³⁶⁷ Ibid, p.72.

Many aestheticians have tried to avoid the problem of an aesthetic object which has aesthetic value whilst not respecting the same value in others by claiming that the aesthetic response should be focused purely on appearances and not "how things are". The problem with this alternative solution however is that it would mean ignoring much of what makes nature so interesting and therefore what makes it so aesthetically valuable.³⁶⁸ If we ignore our belief that the cat is stalking a bird then we will be focusing purely on a cat that is lying close to the ground. We may well get much pleasure from the admiration of its coat and form but there will also be much of the aesthetic experience that is lost. Watching a stalking cat is so pleasurable because it gives us a chance to admire the skill of the cat, to admire its muscle, speed and stealth. We can reflect on the evolution of the cat and compare its behaviour and form to its larger cousins such as lions and tigers. To completely disregard such imaginings and associations would not only detract from the aesthetic response but would also further distance the aesthetic appreciation of nature from the aesthetic appreciation of art. When admiring art we do not disengage the intellect in the way that such a simplification of nature would involve. It is important to the enjoyment of art that we consider possible meanings behind art and consider relevant art history and theory. To remove such analysis from the aesthetics of art would completely change the aesthetic experience and would not be acceptable, leading to the question of why it would be appropriate for nature when it is not an appropriate scenario in art. By removing the thought-component from the aesthetic appreciation of nature we would be completely changing what the definition of the aesthetic response is, further distancing the aesthetic appreciation of nature from the aesthetic appreciation of art as well as greatly reducing the depth and

³⁶⁸ Kemal, S. & Gaskell (1993) "Nature, fine arts, and aesthetics".

quality of the aesthetic response itself. Hepburn therefore suggests that we accept the concept of a sliding scale in the aesthetic appreciation of nature with the two extremes, neither of which, by themselves, are aesthetic. We need to find a mid-way between admiration of nature and our knowledge of the destructive forces of nature;

“Between the extremes, we might find an acceptable ideal for serious aesthetic perception in encouraging ourselves to enhance the thought-load almost to the point, but not beyond the point, at which it begins to overwhelm the vivacity of the particular perception”.³⁶⁹

By having respect for nature we can avoid focusing too much on the violence of nature whilst also not allowing our respect for nature to drift into the realms of the idealisation of nature. We need a happy medium between the two.

A second problem that Hepburn identifies with appreciating nature on its own terms concerns the involvement of the metaphor in the aesthetic response. We often use metaphors in our response to nature, both to describe nature and by using nature as a metaphor in our daily lives. Hepburn uses the example of the expression “dark nights of the soul”³⁷⁰ but other examples would be if we were to describe our feelings upon hearing bad news as being “as if one were struck by lightning” or someone’s happy demeanour as being “like a ray of sunshine”. Such metaphors encourage us, subtly, to take nature as other than it is. By comparing someone’s good mood to sunshine, we are encouraging the idea that sunlight is happy or is at least representative of happiness. Similarly, the idea that getting bad news is like being struck by lightning encourages us

³⁶⁹ Hepburn, R.W. (1993) “Trivial and Serious in Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”, p73 (emphasis Hepburn’s).

³⁷⁰ Ibid, p73.

to demonise lightning as something almost deliberate in the danger it poses to us.

Hepburn therefore argues that in order to avoid this pitfall, we must

“be aware of the metaphorically and the enigmatic quality, and to allow that awareness to characterise the thought-side of the experiences”.³⁷¹

In other words, the emphasis is on us, the observer, to be responsible for the metaphors we use.

Another factor in the aesthetic appreciation of nature that Hepburn picks upon as problematic is the role of imagination. Hepburn claims that imagination has a tendency to make all nature ‘like’ something, leading to the simplification and idealisation of nature. This is in many ways simply an extension of Hepburn’s discussion of metaphors. The two are linked in that both rely on associations with the aesthetic object or our other experience and beliefs, indeed metaphors can only come about as a direct result of imagination. Hepburn goes on to say that he does not mean this to imply that there is no room for variation in the aesthetic response. Like Goodman, Hepburn allows for the fact that those with different ‘versions’ of the world will have different beliefs about the world and therefore different responses to nature. This means that whilst we should not allow the metaphors we create around nature to go too far, we should also allow for the fact that aesthetic responses will vary from individual and that the metaphors we use to describe nature often add to the richness and diversity of the aesthetic responses. Hepburn claims that literalism can result in the rejection of aesthetic responses that can, whilst not resulting from a ‘true’ version of the world, still help us extend our aesthetic response to the object and so be of value;

³⁷¹ Ibid, p.75.

“All (metaphors) are apprehended with a mysterious sense that the components... deeply *matter* to us... To decide that there is no readable significance is not necessarily to discredit such an experience or to show it up as illusion. Any discrediting is again the work of literalism. Naively serious, and *thus trivial*”.³⁷²

The fact that there is a social trend towards ‘realism’ may in itself be conducive to triviality as it is in many ways yet another social or outside factor unrelated to the aesthetic object that influences us. Hepburn compares the aesthetic response to nature to the experience of dreams and points out the aesthetic of dreams, though illusionary, are still of value. Just because one response to nature is serious, does not mean that any other aesthetic response to the same object or landscape is trivial. The involvement of imagination and metaphors in the aesthetic appreciation of nature, Hepburn suggests, like so many things, is reliant on our judgment and focus for control. By being aware of the problems and pitfalls surrounding these ‘extras’ of the aesthetic experience, we can learn to keep the aesthetic response within the realms of the serious.

Hepburn argues against applying art theory to nature in order to rein in the aesthetic response as it is, he claims, ineffective. Art theory is generally, understandably, based on the fact that there is an artist whether that theory is a formalist approach or an expressionist approach or another approach.³⁷³ It is the absence of an artist in nature, or more to the point, the absence of intent, that results in the open character of the aesthetic response.³⁷⁴ Hepburn leaves us then with a complex question: Can the aesthetic appreciation of nature ever be serious? With the emphasis that Hepburn puts upon

³⁷² Ibid, p.75 (emphasis Hepburn’s)

³⁷³ Carroll, N. (1999) *Philosophy of Art*.

³⁷⁴ Berleant, A. (1993) “The Aesthetics of Art and Nature”.

awareness and self-control, the aesthetic response to nature is made, as Hepburn freely admits, hard work. That said, two points particularly stand out from Hepburn's discussion, firstly that one needs to have a respect for the relevant and secondly that the 'perceptually' correct is not necessarily superior to the illusionary. There is a conflict between the two that can never be completely resolved and it is up to the individual to bear responsibility for their responses. I would argue that Hepburn is correct and earns his relevance to the debate in his identification of the two components that need to be dealt with in order to 'control' the aesthetic response to nature. Hepburn appears to have a theory that, like Brady as we shall see, echoes Kant's idea of a perception based aesthetic, even if Hepburn's views would be far more open to the involvement of the thought component than Kant. The idea of a sliding scale where the thought component is given a place yet restricted by the perception is also faintly reminiscent of Kant's disinterestedness whilst again being more open to aspects such as imagination and emotion. Although Hepburn's scale is attractive in what it includes, it still does not tell us enough about what can be thought of as relevant in the thought component. Even if the aesthetic response to nature is perception lead, there may still be many emotions or associations that, whilst related by the individual to the form of the aesthetic object, are based on biased or incomplete versions of the world. I feel that Hepburn's arguments work well in as far as they go but are unable to take the last step towards telling us how to know which associations are trivial in the aesthetic response to nature.

8.2 Carlson.

One of the major theories that have been suggested concerning the regulation of aesthetic responses to nature is the Natural Environment Model suggested by Allen Carlson.³⁷⁵ Carlson argues that one can mirror the categories in art suggested by Kendall Watson by referring to science. Knowledge of science can, he argues, lead us to have a greater understanding of nature and therefore be able to appreciate nature more accurately. The argument is that science can help us to understand the aesthetic object correctly and therefore to respond appropriately. Although evolution has no intent and can therefore not completely mirror the role of artist, it can provide us with an understanding of why a habitat is like it is and to appreciate the role each organism plays within that habitat. Carlson illustrates his point by claiming that,

“The graceful and even elegant moose would seem an awkward deer; the charming, cute woodchuck, a massive and awe-inspiring brown rat; the delicate sunflower, a stiff and stodgy daisy.”³⁷⁶

This reflects how a knowledge of art history and art categories can help us understand what the artist was aiming to portray and why. An individual with a substantial knowledge of Picasso’s work is likely to respond to Picasso’s work in a manner much more appropriate to the work than an individual who is coming to the same art work without any knowledge of art. Likewise, Carlson claims that

“knowledge of the environment may yield appropriate boundaries and limits; the sand of circadas may be appreciated as a proper part of the environment, but the

³⁷⁵ Carlson discusses his theory in both Carlson, A. (1993) “Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature” and Carlson, A. (1979) “Appreciation and the Natural Environment”. A good summary can also be found in Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature* and Carlson, A. (2000) *Aesthetics and the Environment*, Routledge, London.

³⁷⁶ Carlson, A. (2000) *Aesthetics and the Environment*, Routledge, London, p. 89.

sound of distant traffic excluded much as we ignore coughing in the concert hall”.³⁷⁷

It is reasonable to suggest that a greater understanding of the aesthetic object, in this case nature, would provide us with a better understanding of what should be associated with the aesthetic object and what should be discounted. Knowledge of the aesthetic object can help us have an ‘appropriate’ and deeper understanding of *what* we should be appreciating and *how*. Carlson thinks that in order to appreciate a waterfall appropriately, we must have some kind of concept of what a waterfall actually is. This seems to make sense. Unless we know what an object is, how can we have any understanding of its role in nature and therefore what association would be appropriate or inappropriate? It is logical to argue that the more information that we have about an aesthetic object, the more likely it is that we will come to an understanding of what associations are appropriate and which are not. Carlson believes that it is through science that an appropriate level of knowledge about nature can be gained. He believes science to provide us with empirical facts about the aesthetic object, to provide us with an objective, unbiased, disinterested understanding of the aesthetic object. Carlson believes that his theory is the best option as it is related to positive aesthetics in that it is objective and argues therefore that all of nature can be defined as objectively beautiful.³⁷⁸ He claims that

“natural objects, unlike works of art, are more or less equally appreciable”.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Carlson, A. (1979) “Appreciation and the Natural Environment” p.267.

³⁷⁸ Berleant, A & Carlson, A. (2004) *The Aesthetics of Natural Environments*. Broadview Press, Toronto (see Introduction: The Aesthetics of Nature)

³⁷⁹ Carlson, A. (1993) “Appreciating Art and Appreciating Nature”, p.221.

As he sees science as objective, an aesthetic based on objective facts must also be objective. He sees objectivity as a huge bonus as it enables us to say without doubt that there are some aesthetic responses that are inappropriate and to be able to clearly define which responses these are in order that they may be rejected. He further claims that this objectivity protects the aesthetic response from venturing into the realms of the anthropocentric. By focusing on objective fact, Carlson believes that we are removing natural aesthetics from contamination from human bias and that we are left with a serious consideration of the aesthetic object.

Carlson's theory has numerous problems. The first and most obvious of these is the idea that it is not only those who have a scientific knowledge of nature that are able to respond aesthetically to nature.³⁸⁰ Carlson's theory implies that someone such as a child or someone who has had no exposure to science cannot respond appropriately to nature. By introducing the idea of science to the aesthetic response to nature, not just as an advantage but as a necessary requirement, Carlson is assuming that it is only through science that we can appreciate nature. This does not seem to be an accurate description of how we respond to nature. Is it necessary, for example, that when appreciating a meadow we understand the ecological composition of the field, which plants are likely to be found there and how they relate to one another? Furthermore, Carlson also does not make clear exactly how much scientific knowledge is needed.³⁸¹ Do we need to have an understanding of only what type of habitat we are admiring or do we need to be able to have an understanding of what makes up this habitat, right down to the soil chemistry. Carlson does not tell us at which point the response ceases to become aesthetic and

³⁸⁰ Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

³⁸¹ Ibid and Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

focuses purely on science. There is so much possible information that could be included under the heading of 'science' that it is hard to know where the line is at which we should consider the information irrelevant. In such a case it could become that it is only professional scientists that can appreciate nature. Children or those with only a basic knowledge or even those with an intermediate level understanding of science could be excluded from the aesthetic response. It may be that some may not consider this a particular problem; after all we have no issue in respecting the aesthetic appreciations of those with knowledge of art more than an amateur. However, if only a serious scientist can appropriately appreciate nature, we must say that earlier generations, children and less science based communities as well as much of the general public are incapable of a genuinely appropriate aesthetic response to nature.

Another serious problem for Carlson is that by focussing the attention on science, the aesthetic response could cease to be aesthetic.³⁸² Kant introduced the idea of disinterestedness into his aesthetic theory in order to focus on what was the *aesthetic* response rather than any other response. Whilst Carlson does demonstrate how the aesthetic response may, in some cases be enhanced by our knowledge of science, by tying the aesthetic response so closely to science, we lose sight of what it means to be aesthetic. Although Carlson may be right in claiming that the aesthetic response to nature is in need of some guidance, denying that aesthetics are the basis of the aesthetic response means that we are left with an aesthetic theory that is no longer necessarily aesthetic. If we add this to the problem that Carlson does not clarify how much science we need in order to appropriately respond to nature, we can see a situation arising where

³⁸² Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

the aesthetic response becomes completely science based and totally divorced from beauty or the aesthetic.

Carlson's theory is also problematic in that it assumes that the inclusion of science in the aesthetic response can be claimed to make the aesthetic response objective. Science isn't necessarily objective meaning that a science based aesthetic theory will not necessarily result in an objective aesthetic response. Much of science is based on theory rather than proven fact as one may assume. An example of this is evolution where in many cases the evolutionary chain has been deduced through theory rather than experiential or experimental evidence or in the case of global warming where there is great conflict as to the exact problems that global warming could cause and the exact extent of the climate change. This is not to say that science is necessarily wrong, simply that it is not completely objective. Scientists and the reports that they write cannot always be trusted to be totally objective. In this respect, Carlson's dependence upon science seems somewhat naïve. Accepted scientific theories have been disproved in the past. Can we truly know that the scientific beliefs that we have about the aesthetic object will turn out to be correct? If Carlson is willing to admit that there is a chance that the scientific response could ever be wrong, then it is a serious problem for the objective character of his theory.

A further problem for Carlson that leads on from this is that it could be argued that a science based approach is in some senses biased towards a human centered, science based culture and therefore a human-centered-science based aesthetic response. Although science is about nature, our knowledge of science in some ways distances us from nature. Science focuses on human knowledge regarding nature rather than just

accepting nature as it appears.³⁸³ Though this may to some extent benefit the aesthetic response in that it can lead us to have realistic beliefs about the aesthetic object in order that we respond appropriately, it also means that we come to have knowledge about nature that it could be argued that it is not natural for us to have. Science tends to dominate the modern West meaning that an aesthetic theory that prioritises such knowledge is prioritising that culture. Carlson may wish to argue that a science based method excludes his aesthetic theory from bias but a science based model, an insistence on his own view of what is objective, is in itself biased. One of the presumed benefits of the Natural Environment Model is that its objective character makes it free from anthropocentrism. However, if we return to Goodman's concept that there are multiple versions of any world, then we can see that a science based approach may constitute one or some of these versions and that this means that firstly we cannot claim that any one way of seeing the world such as a science based approach is objective and that secondly, assuming that any one of these versions is necessarily superior to another would lead to a biased approach. If we cannot say that Carlson's theory is objective then the claim that his theory is free from anthropocentrism falls down as well.

Carlson's main concern in his aesthetic theory is objectivity and his approach has been seen by many as a valid attempt to remove inappropriate responses from the aesthetic response by using an objective means (science) of coming to a 'true' understanding of what the aesthetic object is. I would argue that although Carlson's ideas are extremely interesting in what they try to achieve, they still have two main problems that lead me to disagree with him. The first is that, as I have already said, a

³⁸³ Brooke, J.H. (1991) *Science and Religion – Some Historical Perspectives*. The Cambridge History of Science Series, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.

science based model only tells us so much about the aesthetic object. To rely solely on science as a means of learning about the aesthetic object is biased towards a science based society which is inevitably human. It does not necessary provide us with an objective view of the world, particularly if we take into account Goodman's view of the world which I have argued for previously. The second major issue is that Carlson's approach leaves no place for aspects of the aesthetic response such as imagination and emotion which to me not only weakens the impact of the aesthetic response but also is not a true representation of the aesthetic responses that we are able to have in regards to nature. This is an issue that is particularly discussed by Brady, Eaton and Carroll, whom we shall go on to discuss. This omission means that Carlson's theory fails to capture the full character of the aesthetics of nature as it does not seem to genuinely represent the aesthetic response as many experience and as Berleant argues, neglects aspects of the aesthetic response that are responsible for much of the engaged and free character of the aesthetic response. For these reasons, I am rejecting Carlson's position.

8.3 Brady.

One philosopher who offers a particularly interesting discussion of the role of imagination is Emily Brady in her paper "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" and extended in her book *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*.³⁸⁴ An example of an area of aesthetics that has received much attention in terms of 'trivial' responses is that of imagination. The role of imagination in relation to the aesthetic appreciation of

³⁸⁴ Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature" and Brady, E. (2003) *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, Edinburgh, pp.150-172. For a more in depth examination of imagination in the aesthetic response to nature see Brady's 2003 book which extends and defends her discussion on imagination.

nature has been discussed in detail by Emily Brady and bears, in many respects, more than a passing resemblance to the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature in that they are both aspects of the aesthetic response that have a tendency to both enhance the aesthetic response as well as making the aesthetic response more susceptible to the inappropriate. Both can be argued to enrich and expand the aesthetic response to nature as well as lending themselves to inappropriate responses. Much of the discussion surrounding imagination is connected to the possible subjective character of the aesthetic response to nature. Brady uses Kant's description of the aesthetic response as the foundation for her description of imagination, assuming therefore, that the aesthetic response is perception based before being then further shaped by imagination. Imagination, according to Brady, is used to extend our aesthetic appreciation through both associative and metaphorical imagination, metaphorical imaginings being those where;

“an aesthetic object or aspect of it is fused with some image that is not an image of that object... Working with language (and not necessarily with mental images), imagination creates a novel connection between the different semantic relations that constitute a metaphor.”³⁸⁵

If one were to start by admiring a tree, one would begin by admiring the form, shape and colour of the tree before then imagining how old the tree is and contemplating how long the tree has been there. Brady argues that there are four ways in which imagination can enrich the aesthetic experience. The first of these is exploratory imagination and is based on the associations that one makes between the visual experience of the aesthetic object

³⁸⁵ Brady, E. (2003) *Aesthetics of the Natural Environment*, Edinburgh University Press Ltd, Edinburgh, p.153.

and visually similar objects. This form of imagination is closest to Kant's description of the role of perception in the aesthetic response. A possible example of such imagination would be if one were to compare birdsong to the sound of a flute. In this case the imaginative experience starts with the aesthetic experience itself and is then extended through simple comparison through memory. The second form of imagination is projective imagination. This is where one projects imagined scenarios onto the aesthetic object. An example of this is if one were to watch an eagle and imagine flying with it, to imagine that the eagle feel a joy and freedom at its skill in flight. The third form of imagination, ampliative imaginative, is related to the tendency of the observer to create working images concerning the aesthetic object such as if one was to imagine the view of the flying eagle, to visualise what it sees. The fourth and final form of imagination that Brady describes is revelatory imagination and involves a realisation about the 'world' or self that has arisen as a result of the aesthetic experience. It occurs as a result of ampliative imagination and could be something such as contemplating the vulnerability of the world to global warming when responding aesthetically to an unseasonable downpour. All of the types of imagination that are described by Brady can be connected to emotion. Emotions arise due to the same processes that imaginative responses occur. In order for one to be able to make the emotional connections that I have discussed involving versions of the world, one must have imagination. This is a concept that is further backed up by philosophers such as Cooper and Collinson who argue that imagination is essential to our ability to understand and process our experience of the world.³⁸⁶ Without imagination we would have difficulty creating the

³⁸⁶ Collinson, D. (1992) "Aesthetic Experience" in *Philosophical Aesthetics*, Eds. O. Hanfling, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, pp. 111-178 and Cooper, D.E. (1992) *A Companion to Aesthetics*, Blackwell

versions of the world that Goodman discusses; we could not build the necessary links between different versions and worlds, there would be no shaping of 'knowledge'. This is not to say of course that knowledge is an optional extra to our imagination. It is of course through experience of the world that our imagination is made possible just as it is through imagination that we interpret our worlds. In many ways imagination is what makes Goodman's worldmaking possible.

Emily Brady makes several criticisms of Carlson's theory in her paper 'Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature'. The first of these is that scientific knowledge is not aesthetic in itself and has, it could be argued, no necessary place in the aesthetic response. Although scientific knowledge may in some cases extend and enrich the aesthetic response, there are also many examples where scientific knowledge plays no role at all. Furthermore, scientific knowledge is not the only type of knowledge that may be relevant. Knowledge of myths, cultural knowledge and religious beliefs are all factors that both Brady and Eaton believe to be valuable to the aesthetic response. Brady also argues that although integrating science with the aesthetic may be useful when protecting nature as an environmentalist, the involvement of science could result in

"the disadvantage that scientific and aesthetic value might become indistinguishable in the deliberative process".³⁸⁷

Brady ends her critique of Carlson by saying that by focusing on scientific knowledge, the perceptual aspects of the aesthetic response are neglected. As she says,

Publishers, Cambridge, Mass.

³⁸⁷ Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

“Another distinctive aspect of aesthetic appreciation is its free yet disinterested character; in particular we are freed from instrumental or intellectual concerns... Scientific knowledge can impede attention to these qualities, thus diverting aesthetic attention”.³⁸⁸

A defense of Carlson is that in recent papers Carlson’s ideas seem to have softened somewhat in that he argues for a pluralist view of nature appreciation.³⁸⁹ This is an approach which is still a positive, objectivist position lead by historical, scientific knowledge but one that allows some role for aspects such as myth and art in that these factors play such a significant role in natural history. This still however does not solve the problem that Carlson’s account neglects, in Brady’s view, the perceptual elements of the experience, thereby moving away from the concept of the aesthetic.

As Brady wishes to involve imagination in the aesthetic response to nature, it is clear that any theory describing the aesthetic response that she proposes must deal with the problem of inappropriate or trivial aesthetic responses to nature. The method Brady uses to avoid the pitfalls of such responses is to suggest two guidelines to be used alongside her description of imagination in the aesthetic response to guide our responses. The first of these guidelines goes back to Kant and is the concept that for a response to be aesthetic, it must be disinterested. Disinterestedness means to be detached from one’s personal interests in the aesthetic response, to be free from self-interest. The second guideline relies on the observer’s ability to “imagine well”³⁹⁰. Brady compares this to Aristotle’s ideas about virtue and claims that “imagining well” can, like

³⁸⁸ Ibid, p.159.

³⁸⁹ Carlson, A. (2002) “Nature Appreciation and Aesthetic Relevance” in *Environment and the Arts*, (Ed) A. Berleant, Ashgate, Hampshire.

³⁹⁰ Brady, E. (1998) “Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature”, p160.

Aristotle's virtue, be learnt through practice. These two guidelines are aimed at getting the observer to take responsibility for their aesthetic response in a similar way to the aesthetic response to art where most might expect an observer to have an at least rudimentary knowledge of art in order that their judgment of an artwork may be taken seriously.

One possible problem for Brady is that there are some appropriate responses to nature that are not perception-led.³⁹¹ If one is admiring a tree that one knows will shortly be chopped down, this knowledge is likely to be a major factor in shaping the aesthetic response even though there may be no visual evidence of the tree's fate. Despite this, it is likely that Brady would reply by saying that the above example is not incompatible with the view that aesthetic responses are perception led. Imagination needs a starting point, which in an aesthetic response would still be the perceptual basis of the aesthetic object. This means that even though Brady allows imagination to take a significant role, her resulting aesthetic theory is still perception led. Even though the imaginative response to the tree is based on the knowledge that the tree is to be chopped down, it is the sight of the tree, the feel of the tree, the experience of the tree itself that triggers the experience. It is not the knowledge of the tree itself that triggers the aesthetic response (even if that response is heavily dependant on the knowledge of the tree's fate) it is the experience of the tree or in other words, the feelings and imaginative flights that are inspired by our interaction and experience of the tree itself. This therefore means that Brady's theory is still based on perception even though she makes a place for other factors to be involved.

³⁹¹ This is a potential problem that Hepburn mentions in reference to his own theory but is also relevant to Brady's theory.

The second guideline has been criticised by some such as Eaton as being rather vague and in need of expansion. Eaton claims that Brady does not explain sufficiently what she means by “aesthetic truths”. Brady also fails to give any examples of any aesthetic “falsities” which, as Eaton says, would be the obvious result of the existence of any aesthetic “truths”. The idea that there are “aesthetic truths” to be found in nature implies that the aesthetic response is in some way objective. A possible response to this criticism is that Brady does mention the problems of inappropriate responses. If one admits that some aesthetic responses are inappropriate then this in itself implies that these inappropriate responses could be considered ‘aesthetic falsities’. Furthermore, by being simply prepared to discuss inappropriate responses and how they should be prevented implies that the aesthetic response may not be totally subjective although equally, the involvement of imagination infers that Brady does not see the aesthetic response as objective either. Brady speaks of the observer’s need to ‘imagine well’ which is a phrase that is rather open to interpretation, which may or may not work in Brady’s favour. There is no clear definition offered of what should be thought of as ‘imagining well’ and one wonders how it is that one should learn to imagine well without having a definitive framework such as in Carlson’s scientific theory to refer to. Despite these problems, Brady’s theory is extremely attractive in that it provides important (and well deserved) roles for qualities such as imagination and emotion. Brady’s emphasis on perception and disinterestedness are aspects which are invaluable in the aesthetic response, particularly in natural aesthetics which does not have an artist in the way that art does.

8.4 Eaton.

Eaton is yet another philosopher who discusses the problem of how to avoid inappropriate responses to nature, although she mainly focuses on Brady's discussion of imagination and contrasts it to Carlson's debate on knowledge.³⁹² Eaton argues that not only do we get many of our ideas about nature through imaginative resources such as myths and legends, but also that nature lends itself to imaginings readily and can result in its own brand of 'truth'. She argues that

“myths and legends have shaped attitudes and beliefs about nature and, by implication, about life in general” and that “nature is a source of revelation”.³⁹³

An illustration that Eaton uses to demonstrate this point is that much great art is inspired by nature. It is the involvement of imagination in the aesthetic appreciation of nature that enables artists to take the aesthetic response to something such as a landscape and picture it as a painting. Much art also uses symbolism from nature to create meaning in their work. Spring is associated with new life and fresh beginnings, winter and evening with old age. Eaton further argues, like Hepburn, that the rejection of imagination is part of our Western cultural move away from the subjective and the mysterious. Much of our culture in the West is science based and tries to take an 'empirical' approach to the world. Whilst this may sound a more logical way in which aesthetics should be approached, it is actually a form of prejudice against other more intuitive approaches to aesthetics. Eaton argues that the mystery of nature that is enhanced by imagination is crucial to catching the public's interest in nature. It is our imagination that stops us and makes us take a second look at what we see. If we base our response purely on technical

³⁹² Eaton, M.M. (1998) "Fact and Fiction in the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature".

³⁹³ Ibid, p.150.

point rather than any flights of fancy, one would be far less likely to realise the aesthetic potential of much of nature. Imagination helps us find

“new and more successful ways of designing and maintaining environments”.³⁹⁴

Eaton believes that the role of imagination in the aesthetic appreciation of nature is made more important by the fact that it takes imagination to move away from old-fashioned, out-of-date responses such as the romantic, sentimentalised responses.

A criticism that is often made of Carlson’s theory is that too much information about the aesthetic object may either overwhelm the subject ruining the aesthetic response, or detract from the sensory aspects of the object so that the experience ceases to be aesthetic. Eaton argues that she does not see that this would be the case. By including imagination, there would be some balance between the technical and the abstract, resulting in an aesthetic interpretation of any functional knowledge one had about the aesthetic object. Eaton wants to combine the two factors of imagination and knowledge and to reap the benefits of both. She claims that by reminding ourselves that what we see may not be based on ‘fact’, we can enjoy both the mystery and imaginative potential of nature whilst still having an idea of what is real or ‘appropriate’. Eaton identifies several benefits to acknowledging the role of imagination in the aesthetic appreciation of nature and wishes to find a way to reconcile Brady’s interpretation of the aesthetic response with Carlson’s. Eaton claims that Carlson’s involvement of knowledge, his stricter, scientific approach to the aesthetics of nature, provides the aesthetic response with much needed structure and control. She argues that

“knowledge does not simply deepen the experience that imagination provides, it directs them”.³⁹⁵

³⁹⁴ Ibid, p.153.

Eaton does agree with Carlson in that she says that imagination can, as Brady admits, lead us to have trivial aesthetic responses to nature, but also claims that imagination is also useful in that it helps us to find new ways of appreciating and preserving what natural environments there are. In order to be able to be protective towards nature we must be able to imagine the world without it or at least to have the imagination to be able to see the risks of continuing to destroy it. On the other hand, in terms of knowledge, Eaton deals with the problem that involving knowledge in the aesthetic appreciation of nature takes all the 'fun' out of it, or that the response could become too scientific and lose some of the freedom usually associated with the aesthetic appreciation of nature by claiming that it would be worth the price if it meant that environmental protection increased.

Eaton's theory is attractive in that it enables us to combine imagination and the engagement that makes the aesthetics of nature so interesting whilst also using knowledge to contain the possible responses to that which are serious. What is less attractive however is that even though Eaton criticises Brady for being too vague, Eaton has the same problem herself. Eaton is not clear enough on how it is that the observer can both have their aesthetic cake and eat it. She does not make clear what exactly it is that she is referring to by 'knowledge' (though one assumes it is much on the same lines as Carlson) and neither does she fully explain how it is that this knowledge is compatible with imagination in the aesthetic response. If one is going to take as Carlson does a rigidly scientific approach to aesthetics, the imagination is left with no or little room for manoeuvre. Until Eaton is willing to offer a clearer definition of her concept of knowledge, one cannot be sure how it is that there is any room left for the imagination

³⁹⁵ Ibid, p.152.

(and therefore emotion) in the aesthetic response at all. It is further problematic that Eaton bases so much of her reasoning on what will lend itself to the protection of nature. Although it is undoubtedly attractive to have an aesthetic theory that might also encourage the protection of nature, it is not necessarily the best strategy to have an ulterior motive in mind when discussing aesthetics. In terms of environmentalism it actually means that in order to protect nature one must have external justification rather than believing nature to have an intrinsic value and secondly, if one can protect some areas of nature on the basis that they can be shown to be 'beautiful', how can one protect those areas of nature which are not as appealing aesthetically? Beauty may have its own value but it is far from being nature's only value and only protection. Eaton makes criticisms of Carlson as discussed above but when incorporating his theory into her own, she makes no attempt to deal with these problems.

8.5 Noel Carroll.

Another philosopher who entered the debate concerning how responses to nature should be "controlled" is Noel Carroll. He put forward an emotion based theory that was intended to work alongside Carlson's natural environment model.³⁹⁶ He claimed that Carlson's science based approach left out the more involved responses such as the emotional responses and thought that whilst scientific knowledge can provide us with an excellent framework for the aesthetic response, it is not the only solution to the problem of the inappropriate in nature that Carlson implies that it is. Carroll claims that emotional responses to the aesthetic appreciation of nature are compatible with

³⁹⁶ Carroll, N. (1993) "On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History".

Carlson's natural environment model, if we are able to accept the natural environment model as one option rather than the only option. Carroll further emphasises that he is not referring to religious feelings in response to nature or displacement of religious feelings onto nature. Some may wish to argue that when we respond to a waterfall with awe we are actually responding to the greatness of God's creation or a feeling of reverence. Though religious responses such as these may undoubtedly occur if one is religious, there are other emotional responses that occur in reference to nature and it is these secular emotional responses that Carroll is referring to.

Carroll starts his argument in his paper 'On being moved by nature: Between religion and natural history' by discussing Carlson's approach to the aesthetic appreciation of nature and claiming that Carlson does not fully explore other possible models. Once Carlson has dismissed the object model and the scenic model, Carroll claims he does not attempt to find any other possible models before moving onto the natural environment model. Even if the object model and the scenic model can be rejected easily as Carlson does, there are still other models, other factors that could be considered relevant rather than just moving on to the science based natural environment model. Carlson does not give a particularly extensive or convincing argument for why one should move straight to science as the defining factor as to what is appropriate in the aesthetic response. As many of Carlson's other critics have mentioned there are many ways in which one can respond to nature that do not involve science. Carroll gives the example of a waterfall and claims that such an experience can lead one to feel overwhelmed even if one has no knowledge of bigger or smaller waterfalls for comparison or of how the waterfall came to exist where it does. One may feel moved

emotionally by the beauty of the waterfall and by one's feeling in relation to the waterfall. Such a response does not involve science and yet is still a response that would be considered by many to be both aesthetic and relevant to the aesthetic object.

“it is far from clear that all the emotions appropriately aroused in us by nature are rooted in cognitions of the sort derived from natural history”.³⁹⁷

Carlson's focus on science and only on science does not necessarily seem to be an accurate description of how we make our aesthetic judgments.

Basing the aesthetic appreciation of nature on science and Carlson's insistence on such a close relationship between science and aesthetics, also serves to create a distance between nature and the observer. In contrast to this, Carroll's more emotional approach, his 'arousal theory' as he calls it (not to be confused with the Arousal Theory that exists in reference to the aesthetic appreciation of art – see page 49), allows for a closer, more engaged relationship between humans and nature. Relying on scientific knowledge tends towards concentrating on what others (scientist) have learnt about nature rather than drawing on our own experiences and instincts. This can lean towards an approach that is less concerned with the connection between the individual and nature and which tends to therefore emphasize the duality between nature and culture which emphasises an anthropocentric point of view and further removes humans from their natural heritage and place. The scientific approach appears, certainly on the surface, to suggest that we step back from nature in order to see it 'properly'. Carroll's approach on the other hand is about the response we have in the moment. To say that Carroll's emotion based model avoids creating a distance between nature and the observer does not mean to say that it only involves the visual,

³⁹⁷ Ibid, p.245.

“the sense of mystery awakened by the winding path is linked to the process of moving through it”³⁹⁸

meaning that whilst Carroll is saying that it is an immediate response that he is referring to, he does not mean to claim that some kind of rationality or cognition is not involved. The very character of Carroll’s theory is to involve emotion which, as we have already discussed, involves at least some form of reason and judgments which certainly indicates that he does not intend this to be a theory of mere knee-jerk reactions.

Carroll suggests that Carlson would respond to his ‘arousal theory’ by claiming that such responses

“are not responses to nature as nature”,³⁹⁹

that such responses would not be responses based on an accurate understanding of what the aesthetic object actually is, that they would be subject-centered rather than object-centered as Carlson would wish. Carroll answers this anticipated criticism by claiming that emotional responses can often occur as a direct response of human involvement with nature which would therefore be accurately object-centered. Carroll’s response however seems insufficient to the problem as he still implies that by his definition emotional responses to nature are concerned with the individual rather than nature which leaves him with a problem. On one hand Carroll does have a point. Many if not most of our responses to nature are based on our relationship with nature or situation in relation to nature. An aesthetic response cannot occur unless we have some form of interaction with the aesthetic object. An aesthetic response cannot occur without the involvement of the observer. On the other hand, there is the danger that Carroll could be misinterpreted.

³⁹⁸ Ibid, p.251.

³⁹⁹ Ibid, p.252.

It needs to be emphasised that when Carroll claims that many of our responses come from our experience of nature, it is unlikely that he means to imply that all emotional responses to nature are totally results of the individual's view of nature. Rather he is more likely to be referring to the fact that the emotional responses are based on the interaction of the individual with nature 'in the field' as it were. The emotional response tends to come as a direct result of experiencing nature and the visual and sensory impact that nature provides along with the beliefs we have about the aesthetic object. This is just as likely to lead us to an appreciation of "nature as nature" as a reductive, scientific approach.

Put together, the two theories of science and emotion can, according to Carroll, provide a far more comprehensive account of the appropriate aesthetic response. Carroll argues that these two models will, at times, overlap with one experiencing an emotional response to nature that is both emotional and lead by science. One of the most important reasons why Carlson wants to support his model is epistemological – he wants to claim that at least some aesthetic responses to nature are objective. Kendal Walton, whom Carlson supports, claims that we can only understand a painting correctly, and therefore can only appreciate it correctly, if we have an understanding of the context in which it was painted.⁴⁰⁰ Without understanding what the artist was trying to achieve in the painting, without knowing the background that led to the subject of the painting being portrayed in such a way, the observer cannot adequately understand the painting and is therefore disconnected from the true meaning of the painting, rendering their aesthetic response irrelevant. Carlson seeks to apply this theory to nature. He argues that if we can find categories in nature, this can help us to distinguish what it is that we should be

⁴⁰⁰ Walton, K. (1970) "Categories of Art", *The Philosophical Review* Vol.79, pp. 334-367.

appreciating about nature and therefore discover what is ‘correct’ in the aesthetic response to nature. He therefore suggests science as the method of categorizing nature. By doing this however, he neglects emotion. This means that if we are to add Carroll’s ‘arousal theory’ to the natural environment model, we must still be able to claim that aesthetic responses are or can be objective.

“Being emotionally moved by nature is just a subclass of being emotionally moved. And on the view of the emotions that I, among many others, hold, an emotion can be assessed as either appropriate or inappropriate. In order to be afraid, I must be afraid of something, say an oncoming tank. My emotion – fear in this case – is directed; it takes a particular object. Moreover, if my fear in a given case is appropriate, then the particular object of my emotional state must meet certain criteria, or what are called “formal objects” in various philosophical idioms”.⁴⁰¹

This view mirrors what I have discussed regarding the involvement of reason in emotion. Our emotions do not occur randomly but rather in response to beliefs we hold regarding the object or individual we feel emotionally about. In the aesthetic response to nature therefore, our emotions are a direct result not only of what we gain through our senses regarding the aesthetic object but also of the beliefs we hold regarding the aesthetic object. By taking this view one can claim that it is possible to speak of an emotion as inappropriate. Carroll is trying to show that his theory is compatible with an objective aesthetic theory such as Carlson’s. To do this he would have to assume that

⁴⁰¹ Carroll, N. (1993) “On Being Moved by Nature: Between Religion and Natural History”, p. 257 (emphasis Carroll’s).

our emotional responses are based on objective criteria, a position I would obviously dispute.

Carroll then introduces the idea of the “wrong comparison class” which he acknowledges might seem to imply a return to Carlson’s arguments regarding categories, a scenario he rejects on the basis that he is not involving science. Carroll is here referring to the idea that it is common practice when appreciating a natural aesthetic object to compare it to something else. The Grand Canyon may make us feel very small when compared to us, however if one were to imagine it in comparison to the universe or even just to the earth, we may feel moved by the knowledge that something that seems so big is, when compared to other things, actually so small. Here Carroll wants to say that there are some comparisons that we make in order to help us comprehend an object that are inappropriate and that a system of comparison classes is needed is that that does not compare the aesthetic object to something inappropriate. This is reminiscent of Kant’s concept of disinterestedness in that Carroll seems to want us to separate the aesthetic object from outside factors, however he does not provide much guidance on how exactly this might be achieved.

Carroll also anticipates the possible complaint that his approach is not as ‘deep’ as a science based approach as it involves less analysis of the aesthetic object. He answers this by saying that just because the analysis is not scientific, is not to say that the response does not have depth. One can still analyse an object without involving science. Furthermore, he adds that aesthetic responses in art do not only occur due to one’s knowledge of art, emotion plays a role in art as well. One can have emotional

responses in art just as one can in nature, maintaining the mirroring tendency between the aesthetic appreciation of nature and the aesthetic appreciation of nature.

Carlson replied to Carroll's ideas in his 1995 paper 'Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge' and argued that Carroll's model would ultimately collapse into the natural environment model and was therefore redundant.⁴⁰² Carlson argues that as Carroll has claimed that in order to have an emotional response we must hold a belief about the object or situation that has aroused the situation, the arousal theory is no different from the natural environment model. Carlson claims that there are only two factors separating the two theories; the element of response emphasized (cognitive in terms of the natural environment model and responsive in the arousal model) and the nature of the cognitive aspect of the response. The second difference is the more significant one and is itself not that problematic for Carlson who argues that,

"This knowledge is, if not exactly straightforwardly scientific, at least the product of the commonsense predecessors or analogues of science."⁴⁰³

This leads the arousal theory back to the natural environment model meaning that the arousal theory really offers little that is new to the debate.

Ultimately, as interesting as Carroll's theory is, it seems that it is rather too susceptible to problems. It is unconvincing as it cannot really explain how one is to combine emotion and science and does not adequately deal with the problems that he admits Carlson's theory suffers from. Despite the fact that it is a theory that attempts in many ways the same project as this thesis, to involve emotion in the aesthetic response to nature. It does not give a sufficient explanation of how knowledge can translate to

⁴⁰² Carlson, A. (1995) "Nature, Aesthetic Appreciation, and Knowledge", *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, Vol. 53, No. 4, pp. 393-400.

⁴⁰³ *Ibid*, p.399.

emotion nor how it is that these responses can be both emotional and scientific, leaving therefore still a need for a theory that both prevents inappropriate aesthetic responses to nature whilst also allowing emotion a major role.

8.6 A Final Theory.

I have taken my final ideas on how the aesthetic response to nature should be restricted mostly from the aforementioned theories. Hepburn's distinction between the sensuous (or perceptual) component and the thought component is a particularly good starting point for defining my own theories as it gives us a clear idea of how the aesthetic response is shaped. If we are to start with the sensuous component, it seems that the main problem is the tendency to be inattentive or shallow in our observations. This is the more easily dealt with aspect where it seems best to suggest that unless we are fully engaged with the aesthetic object, it cannot really be considered an aesthetic response.⁴⁰⁴ The sensuous component should not be simply a case of what the senses happen to pick up on, it should instead be the concentration of the senses, the perception of the aesthetic object. This is not to say that the response should not be immediate or spontaneous but rather that it should be attentive to the aesthetic object. By insisting on a focus on the object in aesthetics, by allowing it to be perception lead, we can reduce trivial responses occurring as a result of the perceptual element of the aesthetic response. If then we can move on from the sensuous component to the thought component, we can see from the previous discussion that it is here that many of the trivial aspects of the response occur. Firstly, the aesthetic response should be, as both Kant and Brady

⁴⁰⁴ This is an idea that comes from Budd and goes back to Kant. See Budd, M. (2002) *The Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature*.

suggest, perception lead. This means that, as in Hepburn's theory where the thought component is restricted by the sensory component, the associations that we make with the aesthetic object can only occur in relation to the aesthetic, sensory experience. An example that could be used here is to return to the much used illustration of the meadow. For the response to be aesthetic one must be focused on the aesthetic nature of the scene. Our emotional aesthetic response to the meadow should be led by our immediate experience of being in the meadow and our observances of our environment. This will keep the response aesthetic as it places the emphasis on the aesthetic object. By looking at how others have dealt with the problem of 'trivial' responses to nature it is easy to see at least one theme that is commonly proposed and which should therefore be my second suggestion for guiding the emotional aesthetic response to nature. Almost all of the aforementioned theories mention Kant's concept of disinterestedness. This is an exceedingly useful concept that enables us to expect some self-control from the observer in terms of the associations that they make with nature in so far as self interest goes. Our response to the meadow therefore must be focused the aesthetic aspects of the meadow and not become concerned with personal or everyday issues. In terms of emotion however, which is my main concern in this thesis, disinterestedness does not seem to go far enough to prevent inappropriate responses. An association can be irrelevant without falling under the heading of being 'interested' and is therefore in need of some kind of restrictions. There are many 'trivial' responses that cannot be prevented by disinterestedness or are in areas where the distinction between what is 'interested' and what is 'disinterested' is unclear. For that reason it is necessary to, if we borrow a term from Brady, introduce a third 'guideline'. If we return to the idea that emotional

aesthetic responses to nature are a result of associations we have with the aesthetic object and the versions of the world from which we get these associations, we can see how it is easily possible that some of these associations may be based on biased, incomplete information or irrelevant to the aesthetic object. If it is therefore possible to identify these associations, or rather the versions of the world that results in them, as the cause of any 'trivial' responses, being as they are, the cognitive element of the response rather than the perceptual, it must be this same element of the response that must be constrained if we are to restrict 'trivial' emotional aesthetic responses. The question is; if these versions of worlds are relative, how do we restrict something which is not objective? If then we cannot necessarily say that the beliefs that we have about an aesthetic object are 'wrong', does this stop us from criticising beliefs as being irrelevant to the aesthetic object or incomplete? To say that our 'knowledge concerning the aesthetic object is incomplete might seem to indicate that there is an objective truth but this need not necessarily be the case. If our beliefs surrounding the aesthetic object are based on one particular version of the world when other versions of the world may contradict or add to it, it is possible to take into account that a response based on those belief are not based on a full awareness of the aesthetic object without dismissing it as 'wrong'. The third guideline therefore needs to acknowledge that whilst many of these aesthetic responses cannot be discounted as 'wrong' there is still a need to be cautious in the associations that we use in the emotional aesthetic response. I am therefore going to return to Brady's idea of "imagining well".⁴⁰⁵ To prevent inappropriate emotional aesthetic responses to nature as a result of inappropriate associations with the aesthetic object, we need to have an awareness of the problems caused by trivial responses and to

⁴⁰⁵ Brady, E. (1998) "Imagination and the Aesthetic Appreciation of Nature", p.160.

be aware that the associations that we make with the aesthetic object may not be appropriate. In our response to the meadow therefore, one should be aware of avoiding sentimental responses and to be attentive and conscious of the aesthetic experience. We need to learn through experience how to “respond well” and to take responsibility for our emotional responses to nature. It is said that there is a wealth of knowledge about art that guides the aesthetic appreciation of art away from the inappropriate by teaching us what to look for in art.⁴⁰⁶ With the increase in interest and of literature written about the aesthetics of nature, it seems that it is now possible to say this to some extent about nature. Claims that something is ‘too sentimental’ or ‘too romantic’ are not intellectual terms beyond the access of the layman, they are commonly used terms. By being on one’s guard against such responses we may well be able to come to a situation where we are able, as Hepburn would like us to be, to appreciate nature on its own terms. This idea could open me to the same complaints that were made about Brady by Eaton, that my ideas of how we should ‘respond well’ and how we should learn this are too vague. However if we consider the fact that cultures can change their attitudes towards nature through time, education and experience, then we can see how, through experience, which is so central to how we learn about the world, we could come to have a better understanding of how one should respond to nature if one is to respond to nature appropriately. This is not to say of course that there are ‘aesthetic truths’ to be found here. The problem with trivial responses is not that they are ‘wrong’, but rather that they are narrow-minded or one sided. To combat this, therefore, one must endeavour to have multiple perspectives which reflect different ‘versions’ of the world thereby widening

⁴⁰⁶ Carroll, N. (1999) *Philosophy of Art*.

the aesthetic consideration. It may seem that I am being 'vague' on how it is that we should learn to 'respond well' but I would argue as an illustration that we are capable of deliberately improving our knowledge on any given subject. We can decide to learn about history or politics, both of which are likely to result in a change in the way we see the world. Most importantly we are capable of educating ourselves about art in an attempt to understand it appropriately and to therefore respond to it more appropriately. Critics of this idea will say that by claiming it is possible to educate oneself in how to respond aesthetically to nature, I am saying that only the appropriately educated can respond aesthetically to nature and laying myself open to similar problems to Carlson and his Natural Environment Model. However, this is not the case. Firstly there may be many instances where a layman happens to appreciate nature without using inappropriate associations and secondly, it has not been said that 'trivial' aesthetic responses to nature are not aesthetic. To provide a system for identifying the aesthetic as Kant did is one thing, to provide some guidelines to prevent trivial responses is another. It is a problematic separation that may seem itself 'trivial' but one that is needed in order to fully explain and understand the aesthetic response. If we have the ability, and often the expectation of a responsibility, to educate ourselves about art and to respect those who have educated themselves about art to make appropriate aesthetic judgments about art, how is it that it is not possible to expect the same when it comes to nature?

Conclusion.

The aim of this thesis was to establish how emotional aesthetic responses to nature occurred and to determine whether these responses could ever be considered inappropriate. This thesis has shown that the role of emotion in the aesthetic appreciation of nature is linked to reason in that our emotions are based on our beliefs, assumptions and knowledge concerning the aesthetic object. This involvement of reason means that we can in a very real sense be considered responsible for the emotions felt. The role of emotion in natural aesthetics is one that is based on a social, historical context and which may therefore be considered inappropriate to the aesthetic object at times. My final proposal in this thesis was ultimately that although our emotional responses to the aesthetic appreciation of nature are relative, we are still responsible for these responses and that, in much the same way as it is accepted that there is a certain 'seriousness' that must be achieved if one is to appreciate art properly, there is now enough literature regarding the serious in natural aesthetics that the same ethic be applied to natural aesthetics as in art. Simply by being aware of the multiple problems of inappropriate response, being conscious of the need to appreciate nature seriously, many of the more frivolous responses could be avoided.

Any thesis could be improved by further research and there is always an increasing quantity of resources to access. An area which I feel could benefit from further research is the question of disinterestedness. The use of the term seems to have changed both in terms of its extent and in its significance in respect to the aesthetics of nature. Kant originally introduced the term in order to restrict the aesthetic attention to that which is purely aesthetic, that one should judge an aesthetic object on form rather

than (such as in his example of a palace) political ideals or associations one has with the object. There appears to be a trend in modern environmental aesthetics towards using the term disinterestedness in aesthetics to mean instead a detachment from self interestedness so that one may involve imagination, emotion and associations in the aesthetic response so long as one is detached from personal, selfish concerns. So long as one is not self-interested, one may allow for a certain amount of interestedness in aspects such as historical background that Kant may have thought inappropriate. The changing use of this term is an area in which I feel more research and argument could be useful. The term 'disinterestedness' has proved increasingly popular in environmental aesthetics due to the fact that it implies that there should be some kind of sense of responsibility. As we have seen, there is a definite move in environmental aesthetics towards being ethically responsible and having a 'serious' response to nature. By involving a sense of disinterestedness, one is able to claim that the response is based on the natural object rather than human interests, thereby avoiding the problem of anthropocentrism.

A second area which would benefit from research and which would lead on nicely from this thesis is an investigation of the relationship between emotion and imagination. There has not been sufficient room in this work to discuss related areas such as this in extensive detail but the similarities between the role of emotion and the role of imagination in the aesthetic response is striking and as has been shown in this thesis, the two aspects often interlink and may be influenced by each other. Whilst the role of imagination in terms of the trivial in the aesthetic response to nature has been discussed, it would be interesting to extend the relativist viewpoint to imagination and to

investigate the extent of the influence of imagination in the aesthetic response. This area would also lend itself to further discussion regarding positive aesthetics. Whilst my final suggestions for the emotional aesthetic response avoid the problems of positive aesthetics in that it offers a possible method of critiquing the aesthetic response, positive aesthetics, particularly in relation to aspects such as imagination has been somewhat neglected. Positive aesthetics is an area that is starting to experience a rise in interest currently and it would be interesting to examine the question of relativism in relation to this debate.

I believe that this thesis has fulfilled its original intent to examine how emotional aesthetic responses to nature occur and whether those responses may ever be inappropriate. I have argued that the emotional aesthetic response to nature is relative to the observer's attitudes and assumptions regarding nature (which are generally a direct result of their relationship with nature which is highly influenced by society) and that therefore their responses may not necessarily be based on a fair analysis of the aesthetic object, meaning that the emotional response may be inappropriate to the aesthetic object. I have, furthermore, gone beyond this to suggest guidelines in order to provide a system for preventing inappropriate emotional aesthetic responses to nature including a version of disinterestedness, responding well and encouraged an aesthetic response that is perception lead. I would therefore conclude that although the emotions felt in the aesthetic response to nature are relative, that is in no way to agree that emotional aesthetic responses to nature are above reproach.

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